

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Horizon

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

THE SHELDONIAN SYNTHESIS BY DOUGLAS HUBBLE

BEST AND THE WORST: II—EVELYN WAUGH BY ROSE MACAULAY

CONTEMPORARY SCULPTORS: V—LIPCHITZ BY JEAN CASSOU

IN THE DESERT BY HALLAM TENNYSON

POEM BY C. DAY LEWIS

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HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

Vol. XIV No. 84 December 1946

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COMMENT

ONE doubt is ruining Christmas for intending visitors to the moon. *Will their papers be in order?* Compared with this problem the few remaining technical difficulties pale into insignificance. I recently put the question to a High Official. He replied, 'The moon is somewhat younger than the earth and consequently may not have attained so full a degree of civilization. However, we may expect that they would wish the first visitors from our planet to give a good account of themselves, and I would suggest something in the nature of a tryptichal or rather heptatichal passport, with visa, priority indication, identity card, vaccination, legitimacy, and currency certificates, and ration book rolled into one. But a visa for the moon should clearly specify which part of it is intended as well as the duration of the visit; it should give the name of the proposed port of entry and here, incidentally, it's no good putting down "Tyco Brahé" if this region is not provided with proper clearance facilities or is known to our lunar colleagues by some outlandish name. But it's not your visa to the moon I'm worrying about,' he said heartily, 'for, as I say, they may be as backward up there about these matters as we all were before 1914—it's your re-entry permit to the British Isles. Why should we let you in? Technically we can give you a visa to the moon and of course you may take your seventy-five pounds there, if it's in the Sterling Area, and apply for a further expenses allowance if you can convince me of the value of your trip for the export drive, giving references of the firms with whom you propose to do business. But what guarantees can you offer us in support of your return? Who will endorse your re-entry visa for us at the other end? Under what statute are we impelled to accept their authority? In whose name will permission be granted? A visa from one country to another is evidence of a reciprocal arrangement; what documentation is there to indicate that such an arrangement exists? Frenkly, I see none. If they possessed a competent bureaucracy, I think by now we should have heard from them. At least at my level. Perhaps you can get a letter sent down by hand from my opposite number. And besides, another point, the faintest deviation of the compass in your return rocket may land you, most inconveniently, in a part of this earth to which you have no transit visa or, worse still, where the general regulations governing the issue of passports do not apply.'

'One more thing', I ventured shyly, 'as you know, you can't get a temporary visa to visit the United States now without very properly being asked what aliases you have lived under, whether you have been to prison or taken part in political agitation and, in addition, you have to have your finger-prints taken. Twenty-one of them, with all the combinations—the old ladies love it. Well, supposing they have only these flippers in the moon, will they accept this form of identification?'

'It's very ticklish—I think I shouldn't risk it, in your place I would offer the selenic authorities a dozen photographs: two full, two of each profile, two quarter, two three-quarters, two back, taken, as a delicate compliment, by moonlight. And finger-prints, by the way, are never really satisfactory—nothing's easier, with all this modern machinery, than to take your fingers off, and then nobody knows *who* you are.'

He looked tense and grim. I drew the conversation towards his favourite hobby. 'Tell me, is it because you felt misgivings about finger-prints that you turned your attention to the feet—your Big Scheme, you remember?'

His face softened. 'No, no, nothing so prosaic. I was put on the track, no, on their tracks'—his face grew almost shy—'by my particular weakness, a fondness for poetry. You remember the verse Gray suppressed from the *Elegy* which ends:

'The redbreast loves to build and warble there
and little footsteps lightly print the ground.'

It must have been that, coming on top of innumerable odes to the nightingale that gave me, one sleepless night, my brainwave, my revelation! Exit permits for swallows—identity cards for birds. Think of it, man, think first of all of the general untidiness, the aimless lackadaisical squalor under the present dispensation. The human population reasonably docketed, an adequate watch kept on their goings out and their comings-in, while the feathered bunch wander all over the place, treating our island as if it were only habitable six months of the year: swallows, nightingales, geese, ducks, snipe, quails, starlings—who include, I'm certain, some very undesirable elements, all the cosmopolitan rag, tag and bobtail, feathered gangsters, the international play-birds living on the fat of the land, gorging themselves on what it has taken us months of toil to produce, billing and cooing and necking and petting, playing their dirty little games in the hedges, making



FIRST PRIZE

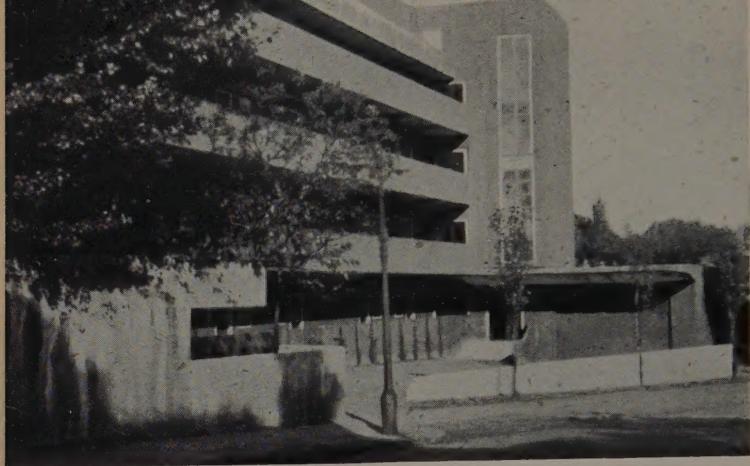
Unoccupied villa in the Müllerthal, Luxemburg.

Date and Architect not ascertainable.

Photographed 10 September 1946.

Submitted by M. Allen.

'Horizon' would like to thank the other competitors

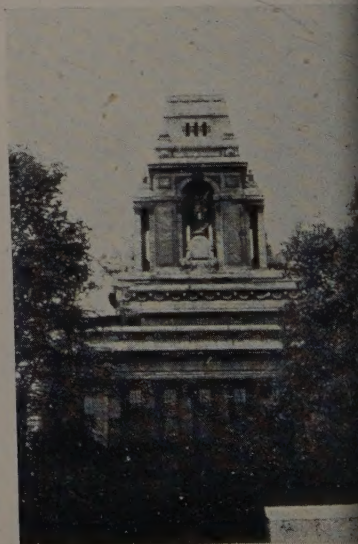


Lawn Road, Hampstead. Service flats.
Architect: ?
Date: ?
Photographed
15 September 1946.
Submitted by
Sonia F. Braham.

Group of buildings, Maryport,
West Cumberland.
Architect: Probably nil.
Date: ? 1870 ±.
Photographed August 1946.
Submitted by G. Wren Howard.



Left
Extension to Prince of
Wales Hotel,
Southport, Lancashire.
Architect: ?
Date: ?
Photographed
14 September 1946.
Submitted by
W. Hirst.



Right
Port of London
Authority.
Architect: Sir Edward
Cooper.
Date: ? 1916.
Photographed
31 August 1946.
Submitted by
Walter M. Sulka.

shameless noises all night, ruining the farmer, loosening morals. Look what the cuckoo stands for in our language—both fool and knave. Little footprints indeed! Well, I shall put an end to it. I'm not going to rest till I've got every one of these little footprints into the filing machine—identity card first, a neat little ring round the leg, and then we'll see who's to be allowed to go where they like, when they like, mollycoddling themselves, exporting capital in their fat, pampered little crops, treating the world as if the whole system of controls and ramifications which go to make up that triumph of the human will and intelligence—a valid passport for a viable frontier—were a thing of naught.

'You remember the lines of Victor Hugo,' he concluded:

'Vite! A tire d'ailes!—

Oh! c'est triste de voir s'enfuir les hirondelles

Elles s'en vont là-bas, vers le midi doré.'

Well, I don't find it *triste*. I find such behaviour incompetent and impertinent, a reflection on my terms of reference and, incidentally, not very British, and somehow I don't think, when I've framed my little wing-clipping regulation with the Minister, that Master Swallow will recur.

UGLY BUILDINGS COMPETITION

It is with great concern that we announce that in the Ugly Buildings Competition once more Britain has come off second best. The First Prize is awarded to Mr. Michael Allen for his villa in Luxemburg, which is sombrely hideous in every detail. The Second Prize is divided. Of Lawn Road Flats, Miss Braham writes, 'Deny the camera which cannot reproduce their revolting colouring and depressing grimness'. Mr. Sulka writes, 'Temple of Neptune, taken in the rain'. The Prince of Wales extension shows a between-war Tudor and the view of Maryport shows an ugly group of buildings rather than a single one. (Note how the staircase ascends not to freedom—but only to *more* ugliness. A Kafkaesque subtlety.) We have decided to continue the competition for another year and offer the same prizes for new attempts made between 1 January and 1 October 1947.

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HORIZON for 1947 will consist of eighty pages and cost half-a-crown. The subscription rates, postage included anywhere, will be 32s. for a year and 16s. for six months. We deeply regret having to put the price up, for it had been our wish to increase the number of pages and the thickness of the paper without being driven to add to the price, but the new increase in printing costs has made this impossible, and we ask our subscribers and readers to put up with this state of affairs till the age of plenty returns, and we can return to our modest beginning.

C. DAY LEWIS

EMILY BRONTË

ALL is the same still. Earth and heaven locked in
 A wrestling dream the seasons cannot break:
 Shrill the wind tormenting my obdurate thorn trees,
 Moss-rose and stone-chat silent in its wake.
 Time has not altered here the rhythms I was rocked in,
 Creation's throb and ache.

All is yet the same, for mine was a country
 Stoic, unregenerate, beyond the power
 Of man to mollify or God to disburden—
 An ingrown landscape none might long endure
 But one who could meet with a passion wilder-winty
 The scalding breath of the moor.

All is yet the same as when I roved the heather
 Chained to a demon through the shrieking night,
 Took him by the throat while he flailed my sibylline
 Assenting breast, and won him to delight.
 O truth and pain immortally bound together!
 O lamp the storm made bright!

Still on those heights prophetic winds are raving,
 Heath and harebell intone a plainsong grief:
 'Shrink, soul of man, shrink into your valleys—
 Too sharp that agony, that spring too brief!
 Love, though your love is but the forged engraving
 Of hope on a stricken leaf!'

Is there one whom blizzards warm and rains enkindle
 And the bitterest furnace could no more refine?
 Anywhere one too proud for consolation,
 Burning for pure freedom so that he will pine,
 Yes, to the grave without her? Let him mingle
 His barren dust with mine.

But is there one who faithfully has planted
His seed of light in the heart's deepest scar?
When the night is darkest, when the wind is keenest,
He, he shall find upclimbing from afar
Over his pain my chaste, my disenchanted
And death-rebuking star.

DOUGLAS HUBBLE
THE SHELDONIAN
SYNTHESIS

To the observer of mankind the most striking and persistent impression is the bewildering variety of human types. It is not surprising then that investigators whose job is the study of Man have sought to reduce this solid mass by grouping and classifying its individual components, but it is also to be expected that the reward of these researches has been incommensurate with the investigator's toil. It is easy enough for anthropologists, mathematicians and statisticians to devise new ratios and indices of human measurements and many such systems have been constructed. In general it may be said of them that increasing complexity has not added to their usefulness. Measurements of the head-diameters, of the angle of the jaw, of the chest, together with the ratios of arm and leg to the trunk, and similar metrical exercises common to the anthropologist, the hatter and the tailor, suffice for the usual surveys. The results are no more than the mathematical record of the artist's images, and the anthropologist, content with exactitude and delighting in human complexity, slips his callipers in his pocket and leaves the quest for basic types to more sanguine persons. These others, from Hippocrates to Kretschmer, the medical profession has provided in increasing numbers for the good reason that bodily constitution is very much its business, for the bad reason that it shares with the rest of mankind the easy deception that what is labelled is thereby comprehended.

The latest, the most ambitious, and the most industrious of these investigators is W. H. Sheldon of Harvard University. In two books,

already published,¹ he has produced a new index of measurement for physique and for personality, and he promises a third volume which will deal with constitution and delinquency and a fourth which will concern the relation of disease processes to constitution.

Sheldon and his collaborators approached the problem of the basic differences in human bodies by the examination and measurement of four thousand photographs. By a process of sifting and continuous reassessment they decided that three primary physical components needed description. This was their main departure from the work of other investigators who had been content with two basic types, the longitudinal and the lateral, the thin and the broad. Many other names have been suggested for these two groups, and Sheldon has added his quota to an overloaded nomenclature. In his classification the longitudinal or linear types become the ectomorphs, while the lateral group contains both the mesomorphs and the endomorphs. The ectomorph is long, slender and flat-chested with poorly developed muscles so that he has, relative to his mass, the greatest surface-area and his nervous system, Sheldon assumes, has relatively poor protection. The mesomorph appears to represent a sub-group of the physical constitution known to other observers as the lateral habitus. The mesomorph Sheldon describes as strongly muscled, sturdy and upright, while the endomorph, his second sub-division of the lateral group, is soft, round and fat, with massive elongated intestines and relatively weak musculature.

When one of these physical attributes, ectomorphy, mesomorphy or endomorphy, is strongly developed in an individual his somatotype, i.e. body-formula, is easily discerned, but where, as in the average person, these qualities are mixed, exact measurement is required for an accurate somatotype. At least seventeen diameter measurements are taken and expressed as ratios to stature. Then the strength of the primary component is expressed as a 7-point scale so that the formula for the predominantly soft and spherical would be 7-1-1, for the notably upright and muscular 1-7-1, for the thin and frail 1-1-7, while a person who displayed an exact balance of these three characteristics would have a final formula of 4-4-4.

¹ *The Varieties of Human Physique*, by W. H. Sheldon, with the collaboration of S. S. Stevens and W. B. Tucker, 1940. Harper and Brothers, New York.

The Varieties of Temperament, by W. H. Sheldon, with the collaboration of S. S. Stevens, 1945. Harper and Brothers, New York.

Up to this point Sheldon's work is in a form which can be easily understood and repeated. To the inexpert the argument looks sound and the typology instructive, while the structure of his three basic types conforms with ordinary experience.

It does not require the wit of a Bernard Shaw, however, to deride a research which has occupied many years of painful toil only to establish the fact that the bodies of some men are round, when other learned gentlemen had previously been content to describe them as either thin or broad. Sheldon's work in physical measurement, despite such easy criticism, does represent an advance in anthropometry, though it should in fairness be recalled that his types appear to differ very little from those described by Kretschmer a generation ago.¹ Kretschmer also delineated three types of body structure. The *pyknic* with a rounded, thick-set body and soft, broad, well-proportioned facial form; secondly, the *leptosomatic*, who is characterized by underdevelopment, small proportions and lean features; thirdly, the *athletic* form with its typically bony, muscular physique. It is apparent that the athletic and leptosomatic types correspond well enough with the mesomorphs and the ectomorphs of Sheldon's terminology. Sheldon does not mention this correlation, but he does deny that the pyknic and the endomorph are interchangeable names for identical types. He states his suspicion that Kretschmer's pyknic group must have included many fat mesomorphs, but to the disinterested observer such distinctions would hardly justify a new terminology. Sheldon, however, has not only given Kretschmer's types an exact description, but he has also devised a system of measurement that defines 'soft-part' relationships and body contours—a three-dimensional system which is his chief contribution to anthropometry. His insistence that the somatotype is unchanging throughout life is not, however, universally agreed. Bauer has pointed out that, as age advances, the chest becomes more 'lateral' in type while there is often an accompanying increase in abdominal fat. Certainly one would not expect the somatotype to be immutable. Consider the appearance of a nursery of healthy babies—all unmistakable endomorphs; or the types on a school football-field—ectomorphs predominating; or the middle-aged in the club smoking-room—inclining to endomorphy. This, it may be pointed out, is

¹ *Physique and Character*, E. Kretschmer. Kegan Paul. 1925, London.

unscientific assumption, but equally there is no acceptable proof of Sheldon's statement. To establish his thesis it would be necessary for him either to follow a large group from the cradle to maturity or alternatively to establish average measurements for representative age-groups and show that the difference between somatotype ratings in each group were not statistically significant. The first would be an impossible task and the second an intolerable labour.

But the point is crucial for Sheldon. If I was endomorphic yesterday, if I am ectomorphic today, and if I am to be endomorphic again tomorrow, then what Sheldon is describing is not an inherited, immutable basic character, but a plastic variable. No man can, by taking food, thought or counsel, change his blood-grouping, alter the colour of his cornea, or increase the length of his femur. The identity of each of these individual characters he shares with a million others, but the sum of these shared characters makes him a unique individual. The more measured factors that are included in an attempt to group him with his fellows, the more is emphasized his essential separateness. This is the typologist's dilemma, and Sheldon does not escape it.

With his second volume we leave the calliper and the foot-rule behind. Here temperament is assessed and we know of no yardstick for the measurement of personality, and although Sheldon employs statistical methods and mathematical correlations in establishing his personality-types, it must not be forgotten that the technique employed is that of subjective impression—the technique of the artist and the novelist—which is unrelated to the scientific method. This is not to deny validity to such an investigation, but its results can only be judged as a picture or novel is judged—by the test of conviction.

In this research Sheldon selected twenty-two traits which appeared as primary factors in human temperament. These traits were then grouped into clusters in which the members of each cluster showed positive correlations with other members of the same group and negative correlations with the characters of the other groups. Thus were defined three constellations. Then, by an examination of persons who exhibited temperaments which closely corresponded to each of these three clusters, further traits were added to each until, finally, there were twenty characters in each constellation. These traits composed the basic aspects of

mental and physical behaviour. Some of these characteristics have a 'polar' opposite in another group—for example, *sociophilia* (liking society) finds its easy antithesis in *sociophobia* (hating society). Only five sets of characters were discovered, which had 'opposites' in three groups, the so-called tripolar traits. For example, *assertiveness* carries two antitheses, the one *relaxation* and the other *restraint*.

These three groups of twenty characters represented three recognizable and integrated pictures and formed a scale against which any presenting personality might be measured. Further labels were required and the names viscerotonia, somatotonia and cerebrotonia were chosen to denote the three clusters.

Viscerotonia, in its extreme appearance, comprises a love of comfort, of conviviality, of ceremony and of food; a fear of solitude and of death; tolerance and complacency towards other people matched by a physical relaxation; the easy expression of emotion and a need for companionship in trouble.

Somatotonia, the second component, is characterized by the need for action and the drive to power, and it expresses itself in aggressive and successful activity; in loud speech and in bold enterprise; in disregard of its own and other people's suffering.

Cerebrotonia is the state of repression and restraint—intestinal activity is ignored just as muscular activity is inhibited. The cerebrotonic person is acutely sensitive and reacts rapidly to external sensory stimuli. He is defective in 'effector' expression, but in 'receptor' activity he greatly exceeds both the viscerotonic and the somatotonic. He fears pain and hates noise. He is secretive and apprehensive; he loves solitude and is shy in society. His imagination is vivid so that it runs ahead of physical performance, which makes him incompetent in speech, in action and in sexual congress. He sleeps poorly and is defective in habit formation.

This schedule of sixty characters in their three groups is the basis of the 7-point scale for temperament. The extreme viscerotonic will score a 7-1-1, the hypertrophied somatotonic is indexed at 1-7-1, and the unbalanced cerebrotonic is typed at 1-1-7, while the subject who is not excessively developed in any component will be rated at 4-4-4. As an example of this scoring, in assessing a quality like *indiscriminate amiability*, which is a viscerotonic character, one mark would be given even in the complete absence of any manifestation of amiability and then

from two to seven marks would be given for varying degrees of its display. The working of the scale depends on subjective measurements since there is no index of amiability, and while all might be agreed on the scores of Scrooge and Pickwick, yet there would be no unanimity of opinion in the intermediate grades.

Sheldon's most important achievement in his personality studies is that he has demonstrated a mathematical and significant correlation between his somatotypes and his three varieties of temperament between endomorphy and viscerotonia, between mesomorphy and somatotonia, between ectomorphy and cerebrotonia.

These correlations between physique and temperament are far from exact, and while this discrepancy is not surprising, it directs inquiry to the nature of the traits which Sheldon describes. Granted that they represent the final filtrate of several hundred of related qualities yet some of them have the appearance of being arbitrarily selected. The most satisfactory of them are frankly physiological, and it seems possible that these are the traits which give the closest correlation with the physical measurements. For instance, the association of viscerotonia with a slow reaction, of somatotonia with a low receptivity (i.e. high threshold) for sensory impressions, and of cerebrotonia with a fast reaction and heightened receptivity, suggests a fundamental distinction, but when mental attitudes came to be depicted they represented little more than the usual stage-properties of the man of feeling, the man of action and the man of thought. The one is tolerant, complacent, easy going, convivial, loving and liking to be loved; the second is energetic, ruthless, assertive, bold, brave and noisy; the third is shy, timid, self-conscious and restrained. In Jung's typology the first man is the extravert and the third is the introvert. Sheldon claims for his classification a more complete analysis since he regards the somatotonic personality as a form of extraversion. It is very doubtful whether these somatotonic types—the thrusting politician, the indomitable soldier, the aggressive executive—are indeed extraverts in any fundamental sense. It is true that they owe their success to their preoccupation with external activity and their easy manipulation of outer realities, but this is unaccompanied by any outward emotional flow. Jung's true extravert is Sheldon's viscerotonic and in this attempt to define another type of extraversion Sheldon ignores the exact

nature of Jung's conception. It is as if I had divided mankind into two classes, those who stay up late at night and those who love to rise early, and Sheldon, to improve my classification, brightly added a third group who enjoy a snooze in the afternoon. The value of Jung's idea did not lie in its universality but in a new interpretation of human behaviour.

Another minor criticism of these characterizations¹ is that they include claustrophobia and agoraphobia—both of which must be regarded as signs of abnormal personality. It certainly cannot be said that these two phobias appear sufficiently often in average persons to justify their inclusion. This illustrates another weakness of Sheldon's synthesis, which is to extend the definition of the traits to an illegitimate extent. Claustrophobia, which has a well-defined meaning as the fear of enclosed spaces, is made to include in the description of the somatotonic personality, a fondness for walking about naked. This association, which can no doubt be defended, is about as obvious, let us say, as the connection between anal-eroticism and capitalism in the Freudian code.

A much more serious criticism lies in Sheldon's conception of cerebrotonia. We have seen that physiologically it represents the hypersensitive and rapidly reacting person, while psychologically it corresponds to Jung's introversion. This gives a satisfactory portrait, but to it Sheldon adds the qualities of inhibition and restraint. He states the physiological conception that the 'fore-brain holds in check both visceral and somatic functions'. As a general physiological principle there is some evidence to support it, but as applied to the cerebrotonic person it appears to be unnecessary, for this increased tension in the autonomic system might be better interpreted as evidence, not of inhibition by the higher centres, but of intervention which results in instability. The cerebrotonic's somatotonic and viscerotonic functions are weak because he is under-endowed in these directions, not because of unconscious or conscious inhibition. He states that 'the cerebrotonic component finds its primary ecstasy and its freedom in a certain intensification of consciousness which appears to arise

¹Sheldon's short scale is printed at the end of this article. It contains the ten essential descriptions of each personality. Its reproduction is necessary to give the reader a more exact notion of his system. It will also give him the opportunity to type his relations, his friends and himself. This makes a good parlour game—as personal as 'Consequences', and more intelligent.

from *inhibition* of all of these (somatotonic and viscerotonic) freedoms'. Unsatisfactory as a scientific theory, this principle breaks down in practice. Sheldon repeatedly states that the cerebrotonic component carries the highest level of sexuality; physiologically considered, the sexual function is to be regarded as a form of autonomic and muscular activity, and inhibition cannot therefore be regarded as an essential cerebrotonic characteristic. Moreover, it is this notion of inhibition which gives to Sheldon's idea of the cerebrotonic individual an element of morbidity—and abnormality should not be admitted in a statement of normality. If cerebrotonia represents an average basic reaction, then it should not include such qualities as self-consciousness, shyness, chronic fatigue, timidity, poor sleep, agoraphobia and apprehension. On any showing, these are abnormal characters, all indicative of poor adaptation to the environment, and Sheldon's classification would be the more precise and rational if he eliminated from cerebrotonia this concept of inhibition, retaining only sensitivity and a rapid reaction as the basic physiological characters. This conception betrays him, too, into certain exaggerations and false assumptions. For example, he refers to the Christian era as the 'long period of cerebrotonic ratiocination', and Christianity 'in some sense a religious suppression of somatotonia'. It would not, of course, be difficult to make equally crude identifications in art and philosophy with types of physical behaviour. These ideas are clothed in vague and unscientific terms, and the artist, the philosopher and the theologian would reject them as they have already denied the universal validity of the much more precise and valuable Freudian explanations. Sheldon's work would have been more impressive if he had restricted himself to his personality pictures and if he had not sought to embrace the whole of human thought and activity with his types. Here are some characteristic examples of this inexact inflation: 'As a preacher he is successful, for he talks well and has an inexhaustible flow of sincere viscerotonia'. 'For what is God after all, if not a personification of all three basic components? God in three persons—the somatotonic Father, the viscerotonic Son and the cerebrotonic Holy Ghost.' 'The rather cerebrotonic magazine *The New Republic*.' 'The bathing-suit styles of 1890 and the high, stiff collar represent what may perhaps be taken as a hang-over from a long period of cerebrotonic predominance.'

One searches in vain the traits which compose the Sheldonian concept of cerebrotonia to discover the common attributes of the Holy Ghost, the *New Republic*, and the bathing-dresses of 1890, and one is left to conclude from the context that the inferred meanings are an undefined spirituality, a somewhat contemptible intellectuality, and a prudery which wished to conceal the body.

It is interesting that Sheldon denies that his classification has anything to do with intelligence, but he often writes as if the cerebrotonic and the intellectual were one. Moreover, Aldous Huxley has adopted this interpretation (*HORIZON*, No. 78, p. 409) when he describes the approach of the cerebrotonic in religion as the way of the intellect, and Sheldon in his two hundred published case-notes shows clearly enough that where the cerebrotonic has a good intelligence the common appellation of intellectual or highbrow fits him well enough. However, Sheldon is obviously right in refusing to associate his types with any predetermined intellectual level, though it is more disappointing that, apart from the heightened sexuality of the cerebrotonic, he is unable to make any fundamental distinction in sexuality in his three types. On *a priori* reasoning it would be expected that sexuality was itself a basic physical character which would correspond quantitatively with his physical types.

It is always a disappointment, too, that none of these typologies is able to tell us anything of achievement. Men who reach equal success in the same field may be dissimilar in somatotype, in personality and in intelligence, while those who are approximately equal in somatotype, in personality and in intelligence may travel to vastly different conclusions. Whence comes, then, the impulse to achieve, this sense of direction which overcomes opposition, ridicule, fatigue and inertia? So little that is important in this field does Sheldon tell us that it is apparent that Christ on the cross and the two malefactors might quite possibly have had the same somatotype and a similar personality rating. Aldous Huxley comments: 'With the best will in the world and the best social environment, all that anyone can hope to do is to make the best of his congenital psycho-physical make-up; to change the fundamental patterns of constitution and temperament is beyond his power'. It is apparent, then, that either Sheldon omits something essential in his description of the 'psycho-physical make-up' or else

that he reveals nothing of the reason for one man's achievement and another's failure. Here, for example, are two descriptions of men quoted from Sheldon with the same physical endowments and of almost equal assessment in personality, the one a potential Messiah while the other might well be cast for the repentant malefactor. Both have a somatotype of 2-2-6 (low endomorph, low mesomorph and high ectomorph).

'Case 18, temperamentally 2-3-5, is one of the brilliant and effective people of the series. A tall, conspicuously frail but unusually healthy and boyish-appearing young man, he seems to have met with universal acceptance. He appears never to excite hostility in any quarter. Yet he has a distinct undercurrent of ambitious drive and has entered into academic competition with much of the zest and eagerness with which a 2-6-2 might enter into athletic competition. In the academic field, which he has now made professionally his own, he is looked upon with great favour, and may perhaps be considered a champion. There is a touch of the Messiah about him. In his best moments he plans world reform. Yet in this youth's private life there is the problem of a disturbingly strong sexual appetite. So far he has confined his Messianic inclinations to the disciplining of his own life, and up to the present he has been fortunate in his sexual adventures.

*Group 1.*¹

'Case 19, temperamentally 2-2-5, is a bedraggled Jewish youth who is really a sort of refugee from the world at large. He is weak, both physically and mentally, but he shows it, and by adopting the *persona* of excessive humility has solved his problem of adaptation. He entered College at twenty, struggled through five years of undergraduate poverty, and graduated at twenty-five with mediocre standing. He has been taken under the wing of the Sociology Department, and is now working on a survey. *Group 2b.*'

These case-histories, six of which are portrayed in great detail and two hundred briefly, occupy one-half of the book. They amply illustrate Sheldon's theories and they demonstrate not only his skill in analysis but also his descriptive gift. He combines the insight of the good psychologist with a novelist's apt and witty phrasing. Well-observed comment is scattered through his pages, and I gather but a few examples: 'The open face is the

¹This grouping represents an attempt to classify potential achievement.

somatotonic passport, the amiable face is the viscerotonic passport, and the cerebrotonic face has no passport, but wears a lean danger sign which arouses universal suspicion'. Of the intolerance of the cerebrotonic for tobacco, 'Sherlock Holmes as Doyle *generally* pictured him could no more have sucked half a pound of strong tobacco in a single night than the late Calvin Coolidge could have put away a case of six per cent beer at a sitting'. Of the cerebrotonic disregard of death, he quotes a hospital-intern's description of the death of a cerebrotonic: 'He died kind of careless-like, the way I putt'. Of early rising, 'Somatotonics feel good in the morning. They love to jump out of bed, take a shower, make a lot of noise, and greet the sun.' Of a baseball player, 'He was as innocent of cerebrotonia as a Chicago congressman'. Of the somatotonic reactions to religion and psychoanalysis, 'But for individuals of predominant somatotonia an introduction to their own dream-world often amounts to revelation, and the event not infrequently constitutes a religious (conversional) experience. These people tend to become converts in quite a religious sense to the analytic procedure which has introduced them to the "other side", and if wealthy they make very satisfactory patients or communicants.' (This explains nicely the fact that retired admirals and generals are such enthusiastic supporters of the more eccentric religions.) The cerebrotonic 'may be kind and affectionate, according to the strength and quality of his first component, and he may be fond of action, according to the strength of the second component, but he is not in the final analysis dependent upon affection or action. He is internally self-sufficient.' And of the diagnostic action of alcohol, 'Cerebrotonics can often resist the depressant effect of alcohol with remarkable fortitude, and sometimes they acquire the social custom of drinking, perhaps following the path of least resistance, but they pay well for it. Instead of yielding graciously to the effect of the drug, the cerebrotonic constitution resists violently, using up its reserve energies in its resistance, and a cerebrotonic bout with alcohol tends to be followed by fatigue and low energy for days afterward. For the individuals of cerebrotonic motivation, alcohol is a poison. For viscerotonics and for some somatotonics the drug is without doubt beneficent.'

Whatever may be their scientific value, Sheldon has drawn a succession of brilliant profiles which anyone interested in human

personality will find stimulating. The average reader will comment repeatedly that such-and-such an observation is both fresh and convincing and the validity of such comment cannot be denied. The psychologist may doubt whether these aspects of behaviour do in fact fit together to form three jig-saws of recognizable pattern. The scientist will abruptly repudiate any assessable scientific basis for these personality studies; he will point out that even for the most physiological of the described characteristics—the rapid reaction of the cerebrotonic to an external stimulus—Sheldon has not recorded any standards by which his results might be checked. He will ask, as T. H. Huxley asked the cleric who was describing to him the peculiar spiritual value that was attached to the practice of infant baptism, ‘Where are your controls?’ Sheldon’s portraits are to be regarded as works of art which may nevertheless have value for medicine and psychiatry which themselves are not to be considered as the undisputed territories of science.

Sheldon’s contribution to clinical medicine is yet to come, but he gives us a foretaste of it in this book. For example, the cerebrotonic disposition, he says, makes one particularly liable to violent colds in the head and less predisposed to other infections, while the somatotonic temperament carries an increased liability to acute appendicitis. Such observations as these do not appear to be profound. Clinical medicine really wants to know what are the constitutional associations of such diseases as rheumatism, duodenal ulcer, arterial degeneration, and it would by no means disdain a more exact description than is now available. Draper¹ and his colleagues have been the pioneers in this field. By skeletal measurement, by Sheldon’s somatotyping and by a tally of physical deviations in the individual Draper has described certain constitutional types related to gall-bladder disease, duodenal ulcer, infantile paralysis and diabetes. For example, Draper states that children who contract infantile paralysis show the following five physical characters more frequently than do other children of the same age groups: pigmented spots in the skin, long eyelashes, large central incisor teeth with wide spacing between them, excessive mobility of finger-joints, and an inner fold of skin between the two eyelids. These descriptions have undoubted

¹*Human Constitution in Clinical Medicine*, George Draper, C. W. Dupertnis, J. L. Caughey. Harper and Brothers. 1944, New York.

value, but they do not carry our knowledge of disease much further. It has been known for several generations that red-haired children are more likely to develop rheumatic heart-disease than other children, but we know nothing of the physical link between these two observations. If we apply the trite metaphor of the soil and the seed to disease, we can say that our knowledge of the seeds is considerable and steadily enlarges, but that our understanding of the soil is slender, and while it is increased by such studies as those of Draper and Sheldon, we know nothing as yet of the dynamic impulse provided by the soil. These studies make a slight if definite contribution in the formulation of an answer to 'Why?' in these constitutional diseases, but they reveal nothing of the answer to 'How?', which is the object of scientific medicine.

An American woman doctor, Flanders Dunbar,¹ has studied large groups of patients suffering from constitutional diseases from the standpoint of analytical psychology, and she concludes that persons suffering from identical diseases show similar personality patterns with related unconscious conflicts. Children with rheumatic heart-disease show a strong desire to be loved, a liking for suffering and a sexual conflict of a particular sort, while patients with coronary thrombosis (disease of the blood-vessels to the heart muscle) commonly reveal an internal tension which has its focal origin in a conflict with authority. Such theories are no more than tentative and do little more than remind us that where these constitutional diseases are to be assessed, genetic, physiological, psychological and environmental factors will all require consideration.

If Sheldon's contribution to constitutional medicine appears to be limited, what of his contribution to psychiatry? The basic personalities which Sheldon describes must be regarded as normal, and psychiatry, by definition, deals with abnormal or deviated personality. It is, however, assumed by all psychiatrists of whatever school that, although some mental disorders represent a constitutional or qualitative deviation from the normal, the psychoneurosis is no more than a quantitative deviation, which implies a special reaction to an external stress. For example, X may display in his every-day life anxiety or depression which

¹ *Psycho-Somatic Diagnosis*, Flanders Dunbar. Harper and Brothers, New York.

does not exceed the normal limits, but exposed to military discomforts, to danger, or to grief, his anxiety or depression shows a quantitative increase beyond the average. One might expect, therefore, if Sheldon's mental types are in truth basic, that it would be possible to show, just as each type has a pattern of behaviour, that there is also a characteristic reaction to exceptional environmental stress. For example, that the viscerotonic is especially liable to depression, the somatotonic to hysteria and the cerebrotonic to anxiety. Of this reasonable hypothesis Sheldon's book contains no indication, but he makes some suggestions, relative to his theories, which are of uncertain value. He pictures the schizoid (split) personality as suffering from a *vertical mental cleavage*, occupied with his internal reality and divorced from external affairs, while the somatotonic personality shows a *horizontal mental cleavage*, preoccupied with external reality and unaware of his own inner consciousness. This is no new conception but it fits fresh and illuminating phrases to old ideas. More novel is the suggestion that we should substitute for the time-honoured description, psychoneurosis, the terms *viscerosis*, *somatorosis* and *cerebrosis*. This idea is breath-taking in its simplicity. It supposes that all neurosis has its origin in the conflicts that arise for an individual when there is an excess of one of the three basic endowments. Although Sheldon does not say so precisely, it is apparent that such conflicts could arise in only one way. It is impossible that excess of one of these three endowments could give rise to tension or conflict within the personality, for the more pronounced the basic drive in one direction the less opposition would be encountered from the other two impulses, so that the difficulties must come solely from environmental stresses. For example, the predominantly cerebrotonic individual may be thrust into a somatotonic environment, i.e. the Army, the Rugby of Dr. Arnold, or the Eton of Dr. Warre. Sheldon instances the case of a cerebrotonic (low-voiced) wife married to a deaf and somatotonic husband. 'The young woman had been suffering from a number of cerebrotic manifestations, among them neurodermatitis, insomnia, return of a childhood habit of finger-nail biting, and a peculiar sense of impending disaster. . . . To one who has noted the pain of the cerebrotonic who is forced to raise the voice, it may not be surprising to learn that today the girl is institutionalized. Diagnosis: schizophrenia, type

undetermined.' Sheldon adds the jejune and superficial comment: 'Could this girl have been saved from a fatal breakdown? That we do not know, but at least her departure could have been made more pleasant.' This idea that when any of these three basic endowments is hypertrophied a specific psychoneurosis results which can arise in no other way will convince no one but Sheldon himself.

This terminology contributes little then to the elucidation of the causes of neurosis. It seems to contribute even less to the description of neurotic behaviour. The 'viscerotic person is ordinarily one who is overly relaxed, gluttonous, overly socialized and too dependent on people, overly complacent or the like'. This is an adequate picture of the human slug or the club-parasite, but it bears no relation to the detailed manifestations of any individual neurosis.

It is when one begins to relate Sheldon's portraits to the accepted psychiatric states that one realizes that what he depicts is not the very stuff of human personality but a way of behaviour and a pattern of conduct. The Sheldonian labels do not describe the contents of the luggage nor do they indicate its destination. This is not to deny validity to these descriptions of a few hundred American college boys in Chicago, Wisconsin and Harvard, but let no one imagine that Sheldon has by them added anything to our comprehension of human personality. There is an inescapable law that must condition all such researches into human typology both now and in the future: *the more complete and the more profound the typological descriptions, the greater will be the emphasis on individual variation.*

Charles Darwin spent eight weary years dissecting thousands of barnacles and classifying them into species. Of this work he wrote to Hooker in 1849: 'I have been struck . . . with the variability of every part in some slight degree of every species. When the same organ is *rigorously* compared in many individuals, I always find some slight variability.'

THE SHORT SCALE FOR TEMPERAMENT

1	2	3
Viscerotonia	Somatotonia	Cerebrotonia
Relaxation in Posture and Movement	Assertiveness of Posture and Movement	Restraint in Posture and Movement, Tightness
Love of Physical Comfort	Love of Physical Adventure	Overly Fast Reactions
Slow Reaction	The Energetic Characteristic	Love of Privacy

1 Viscerotonia	2 Somatotonia	3 Cerebrotonia
Love of Polite Ceremony	Need and Enjoyment of Exercise	Mental Overintensity, Hyperattentionality, Apprehensiveness
Sociophilia	Love of Risk and Chance	Secretiveness of Feeling, Emotional Restraint
Evenness of Emotional Flow	Bold Directness of Manner	Self-conscious Motility of the Eyes and Face
Tolerance	Physical Courage for Combat	Sociophobia
Complacency The Untempered Characteristic	Competitive Aggressiveness The Unrestrained Voice	Inhibited Social Address Vocal Restraint, and General Restraint of Noise
Smooth, Easy Communication of Feeling, Extraversion of Viscerotonia	Overmaturity of Appearance	Youthful Intentness of Manner and Appearance

Mark each of the ten qualities on a score from 1-7. Then total the column and divide by ten. Approximate fractions either to one-half or a whole number. The score for each basic type should rarely be more than six or less than two, and the total endowment averages eleven—a score of twelve may indicate excessive endowment and ten under-endowment.

ROSE MACAULAY EVELYN WAUGH

MOST novelists set themselves to explore the world, or some corner of the world, in which they believe themselves to live; they weave their dreams, imaginations and tales within their apprehensions of the life they perceive about them, composing variations on the theme. Other writers step aside, turn an oblique glance on the world they know, reject it, and, half deliberate, half instinctive, compose one of their own making, a world within a world, in which they can move and invent with greater felicity, sureness and ease. Among the world-creators of our time Evelyn Waugh is the most entertaining, and perhaps the most gifted. The world he invented and decorated with extravagant *jeux d'esprit* is a comic world. In it he moves with the blandest security and ease; from within its circumference he can utter any commentary on life, create and manipulate any beings who inhabit there. Brilliantly equipped to direct the radiant and fantastic circus he has called into being, he can stand within it cracking his whip

while his creatures leap through his paper hoops with the most engaging levity, the gravest fantastic capers. His command of verbal style is adept and skilled, his characters admirably irresponsible, his wit unfailing. Like Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead Revisited*, he does more than entertain, 'transfiguring the party, shedding a vivid, false light of eccentricity upon everyone', so that prosaic people seem to become creatures of his fantasy.

What would occur should he step out of his delightful baroque circus tent into a solid actual world (if indeed any world is this) was not a question which used to trouble the reader, who accepted his unique contribution as a priceless gift. It would seem that he has now stepped out of it; and the airs beyond the ropes breathe on us with something less of rarity, with a lush, less sharp and exhilarating taste. It must be the desire of his most ardent devotees that he should speedily retrace his steps.

He did not begin with the circus. His first published works were a brief and competent essay on the Pre-Raphaelites (at the age of twenty-three) and (at twenty-five) a life of Rossetti, an able, scholarly and entertaining study, which, if it reveals nothing new about its fascinating, over-written hero or his friends, gives them an intelligent and sympathetic slant. A serious work of interpretation and history, it did nothing to prepare the way for *Decline and Fall*, which broke on the English literary scene the following year. Sub-titled 'an illustrated novelette', it was, the author explained in a note, not meant to be shocking but funny. A redundant note: *Decline and Fall* is funny from first to last. Its bland, destructive brilliance lights up a world of comic happenings through which people move with the lunatic logic and inconsequence imparted to them by their creator's ironic vision of mankind. Though it was apparent that a bright particular star has risen in the fictional firmament, that firmament was not empty of stars that twinkled a little similarly, with something of the same bland and gay insouciance. But *Decline and Fall* carried the subversive approach further, enlarging the bounds of erratic nonsense. It opens at Oxford, with a riotous meeting of the Bollinger Club. 'A shriller note could now be heard rising from Sir Alastair's rooms; any who have heard that sound will shrink at the recollection of it; it is the sound of the English county families baying for broken glass. . . .'

The detachment is complete. (The scene may profitably be

compared with the Oxford scenes, more nostalgically and naturalistically handled, in *Brideshead Revisited*.) In the ensuing romp, the Bollinger bloods break up pianos, smash china, throw pictures into water-jugs, tear up sheets and destroy manuscripts, and debag Paul Pennyfeather, the innocuous and luckless hero of this tale, a quiet young man from Lancing who is reading for holy orders; he is sent down for running trouserless across the quad. 'I expect you'll be becoming a schoolmaster, sir,' the college porter says to him. 'That's what most of the gentlemen does, sir, that gets sent down for indecent behaviour.'

That is, in fact, what Paul does; he gets a post in a private school, perhaps the only attractive private school in modern fiction, and continues his innocent and disastrous downward career. The school staff, and in particular the headmaster and his assistant Captain Grimes, are superb figures of comedy; the climate is that of an inspired lunatic asylum, the conversations extremely and ceaselessly funny. The story is gaily, grimly and totally amoral; its vicissitudes catastrophically logical; its ingenuous hero the victim of the most shocking turpitudes and betrayals. He is landed in prison, helped out of it by intriguing friends, and ends officially dead and resuming life in disguise, a quiet Oxford ordinand once more. The book is, apart from the sparkle of its wit and its baroque detail, an excellent and coherent story. It moves from start to finish with experienced ease. It has, I believe, been found vulgar by some critics: but it moves in a sphere where vulgarity, refinement and morality do not apply, the sphere of irreverent and essentially anarchic fantasy. The world, one might say, of Ronald Firbank, of Norman Douglas, perhaps of the brothers Marx. But it reflected none of these; it was a genuinely original comic work.

It was followed next year by *Vile Bodies*, a novel more crowded, less classic and clear-cut in plot, more dispersed in interest, more of a revue show. Disappointing at first reading to some who had looked for another *Decline and Fall*, it proved a dazzling kaleidoscope of brightest Mayfair, brilliantly fantastically. 'The action of the book', says the Author's Note, 'is laid in the near future, when existing social tendencies have become more marked. . . . I have assumed a certain speeding up of legal procedure and daily journalism.' Social life, too, is sped up; the parties, the racket, the vices, the chatter, the jokes. Here and there Firbank takes a hand;

as in the dialogue between the two old *mondaines* on the channel crossing. But Mr. Waugh has not Firbank's butterfly irresponsibility; he is never silly; he knows what he is about; his imagination is at once more constructive and destructive. The giddy whirl of *Vile Bodies* snatches up in its dance at least a dozen separate groups of people, each with their own story, as in a ballet where groups perform in different corners of the stage, sometimes crossing one another's orbits, entangling one another's courses, flung together and lurching apart like heavenly bodies on the run. The mass effect of unsteady, extravagant fantasy and sick and squalid reaction is breath-taking. The moralist has looked in; the smell of dust and ashes hangs on the circus air; irony has become less bland, the death's head grins among the roses. Every now and then Mr. Waugh extricates himself from his tale and becomes a commentator, pointing a social moral, with 'Oh, bright young people', or 'You see, that was the kind of party Archie Schwert's party was'. When *Vile Bodies* was dramatized, a chorus of draped figures came on between acts and made lament. This damaged the play. But the comments in the book, though out of keeping, are too infrequent to damage it; it pursues its course, kaleidoscopic, various, irresistibly funny. Its wit seldom flags; situations and persons are flung on the scene with lavish extravagance; a more parsimonious or cautious novelist might have reflected that he was using up in this one book material for a dozen. As before, he has for *jeune premier* and fortune's football an ingenuous and luckless youth, see-sawed up and down by fate, roguery, and his own folly. He saunters tranquilly among sudden fortunes and catastrophes, love, loss, customs officers, dud cheques, drunken majors who welsh, young women as debonair and luckless as himself. He has no more moral sense than anyone else in the book, but a rather appealing innocence. We leave him on the battlefield, grasping in his pocket a Huxdane-Halley bomb for the dissemination of leprosy germs among the foe.

Moral scruples nowhere intrude in *Vile Bodies*. That is, no one has them except the author himself, who shows occasional signs; we discern them, apart from explicit comment, in the book's structure. Agatha Runcible, whirling to her fatal crash in a fantastic motor race, then dying among cocktails and chattering friends, and finally buried with only one of her gay companions at the funeral (the others did not bother to go, or were too uneasily

alarmed at such a grim intruder on their revels as death), is a figure perhaps more menacing and exemplary than the Bright Young Person she seems; Mr. Waugh might, with a little less of artistic control, have emphasized this aspect of her, given her in her last moments a spiritual malaise more explicit and profound than her delirium of racing cars. She dies in a nightmare of skidding wheels and crazy speed, crying '*Faster, Faster*'. Symbolic, but admirable in its reticent realism. Would the later Waugh, the Waugh of *Brideshead*, have been equal to this, or would he have floundered the girl into remorse, bewildered terror of death, change of heart, perhaps introducing Father Rothschild, the priest, into her last hour? There is no such concession here: Agatha dies as she has lived, in a hectic spin.

It is noticeable that none of these people, young or older, has any interest in art, literature, drama, music, or world affairs. They are amiable nit-wits. True, one of them has apparently had abroad with him some books on architecture, economics and history, and the *Purgatorio*; but really only to give the Dover customs officer opportunity for cracks. 'French, eh?' he says of Dante. 'I guessed as much, and pretty dirty too, I shouldn't wonder.' And, 'Particularly against books the Home Secretary is. If we can't stamp out literature in the country, we can at least stop its being brought in from outside. That's what he said the other day in Parliament, and I says Hear hear. . . .'

A pretty scene; but one cannot believe that the traveller had ever read the books. None of the vile bodies reads anything, except the gossip columns in the papers, for which they also write. A critic has said lately in these pages that genuine tragedy at a low level of mentality is a contradiction in terms, and attempts to create it produce an impression of impertinence and moral chaos. I do not myself find this altogether true; one can think of tragedies that befell low mentalities, in Dickens, George Eliot, E. M. Forster, and elsewhere. But if it were true, there could be no tragedy in *Decline and Fall* or in *Vile Bodies*, where the intellectual sensibility of the characters is as low as their moral and spiritual apprehension. Indeed, it is lower. It is not out of the question that the young (and old) barbarians should 'get religion'; there is a moment at a party when, under the hypnotic influence of a troupe of evangelists, Lady Metroland's worldly guests quiver on the verge of self-abandonment to religious hysteria.

'But suddenly on the silence vibrant with self-accusation broke the organ voice of England, the hunting-cry of the *ancien régime*. Lady Circumference gave a resounding snort of disapproval. "What a damned impudent woman," she said. Adam and Nina began to giggle. . . .'

It had been, perhaps, a close thing. The catching of the Bright Young People by any exciting religious movement, whether Aimée Macpherson's Angels, or Mr. Buchman's life-changers, or a branch of an historic church, is always a possibility round the corner. What is not round any corner for them is their conversion to intellectuality, culture, artistic or literary sensibility. Sublimely uneducated, gaily philistine, blandly barbarian, agreeably funny, they reel through the book with the maximum of wit on the part of their creator, the minimum of intelligence on their own. Not for a moment does the brilliance falter or the pace slacken. More truly comic situations, the extravagance of their conception balancing the unemotional economy of their setting forth, are to be found in few novels. As a whole, *Vile Bodies* cannot compete with the more close-knit *Decline and Fall*, but the bits and pieces are as funny, the general effect as glittering. *Decline and Fall* approaches more nearly to the bland shimmer of *South Wind*, that great amoral novel whose ripe intellectual humour none of its contemporaries or successors can emulate. In *South Wind* is true ironic detachment; its author surveys the world with the amused derision of a learned elderly satyr looking on at humanity's capers from his private brake, mocking, philosophic and undisturbed. Norman Douglas deals with all ranks and kinds of person, from peasant to prince; Evelyn Waugh in *Vile Bodies* (more than in *Decline and Fall*, which includes a fantastic scholastic world) concerns himself almost entirely with the rich of Mayfair. Though some of them think themselves poor, they always have money for parties of pleasure. The professional middle classes, who live by their wits, not on inherited capital, and therefore with enforced economy, do not really engage his attention. He is amused and a little beglamoured by the gay and idle rich: too much so, for his wit can play with peculiar excellence on such small beer as seedy journalists, dingy schoolmasters, and shady adventurers.

Between this and his next (and possibly his best) novel, *Black Mischief*, Mr. Waugh produced two travel books, *Labels* and *Remote People*. *Labels* is an account of a cruise, slight, bright and

amusing; witty bookmaking, but Mr. Waugh's is too acute an intelligence for this kind of travelogue. *Remote People* is, on the other hand, entirely up his street; it deals with an actual country which he might have invented for his comic world. Abyssinia was a gift to him. The book's first and better half is a quite brilliant description of the coronation of the Emperor Haile Selassie, which he went out to report for a newspaper. The eccentricities of Abyssinia's ancient and remarkable Christian uncivilization were near kin to his own creations; no wonder that they captured his humour and imagination, and that he made out of them three delightful books: *Remote People*, *Black Mischief*, and *Scoop*. The fantastic contradictions, myths and absurdities of the strange barbarian land, the imposing lavishness of the coronation, made of the expedition a stagey comic opera, a happy blend of the pompous, the romantic, the barbarous, the picturesque, the absurd. It was a theme nicely suited to this sardonic and relishing mind. Abyssinia is savoured with a sensibility no less keen because sharply satiric, an intelligence no less efficient because also romantic.

'It is to *Alice in Wonderland* that my thoughts reach in seeking some historical parallel for life in Addis Ababa . . . it is in Alice only that one finds the peculiar flavour of galvanized and translated reality. . . . How to recapture, how retail, the crazy enchantment of those Ethiopian days?'

However engaged his imagination was by the enchantment, his appreciation of the Abyssinian scene has sobriety and grasp. Picturesque colour and detail, extravagantly funny incidents, abound; so also does information on geography, ethnography, personalities and politics. The book is as amusing and lively an extravaganza as a Waugh novel. That is to say, the Abyssinian half of it is. The second half, which relates travel in East Africa, is less amusing, less fresh in subject, and has its sententious moments. The writer has stepped outside the circus for an excursion into actual worlds. There are a few good scenes, encounters and fiascos, but too few. The lights are down; there is an effect of writing undertaken without much zest.

The zest is all back again in *Black Mischief*, a gay tapestry woven out of the Abyssinian material; with it we are once more inside the ropes. It is an admirably funny fantasia; several of its characters are really good creations (one uses the word to include the

element drawn, in all Mr. Waugh's novels, from life, but fantastically and dressed up in his own manner)—the ingenuous and aspiring black emperor, the helpful Armenian rascal, the enterprising English cad, the British and French envoys. There are a few London scenes of rather dreary revelry and social life, faintly and less gaily recalling *Vile Bodies*, and dealing with many of the same people; but the bulk of the story occurs in Azania, and is in the best vein of fantastic farce. All the author's gifts are in evidence: unceasing wit, precise economy of phrase, quick-fire dialogue, a background of exquisite absurdity. Basil Seal, the hero-cad, a recurrent figure in the later novels, who here makes his *début*, is (within the convention of the circus, and conforming to its terms) a masterly study; a bore to his friends, a cadger, a drunkard, a liar and a thief, he lacks the engaging cheerfulness of Captain Grimes, but has a quality of remorseless and resourceful vice that would fit him for the hero of a gangster novel. *Black Mischief*, whether or not it is Mr. Waugh's best book, is on the whole the most attractive to read.

After it, *A Handful of Dust*, two years later, seems up to a point more ordinary, for it deals with real life: it is a social novel about adultery, treachery, betrayal, tragic and sordid desolation. The gaiety has gone, and much of the wit. The characters seem to lack motive and awareness. The theme is the destruction of a simple, dull and honest bore by his wife, a cad without heart or affections; the social scene is one of dreary squalor and unkindness. Gone is the sparkle of *Vile Bodies*; it is replaced by a neat, crisp, jabbing bitterness and the tragedy of meaningless, silly lusts. Grim events succeed each other; wit is not lacking in their narration, but it has become angry and adult. The last section of the book, however, gives the tragedy a new and wholly original baroque twist; the dull and ill-used hero, born to be betrayed, is left the victim of a fate contrived with devilish ingenuity, and will pass the rest of his life a slave, reading Dickens aloud to his master in an Amazonian jungle; a brilliant and terrifying *tour de force*. Later, the author wrote an alternative ending, of a more ordinary, cynical type; more probable, less remarkable, it has a closer coherence with the rest of the book. *A Handful of Dust* seems to reach the climax of Mr. Waugh's view of life as the meaningless jiggling of barbarous nit-wits. Pleasure, sympathetic or ironic, in their absurdities has vanished: disgust has set in.

What has also gone from his view is detachment. In his next book he is no longer objective: he has come down on a side. In art so naturally ironic and detached as his, this is a serious loss; it undermines his best gifts. And it was unlucky that the first of his partisan, side-taking books should have been a work of history, where objectiveness and truth to fact should be a *sine qua non*. In *Edmund Campion* there is too little of both, though there is interest, brilliance, imagination, and sympathetic interpretation. But it is like a barrister's brief, omitting all that does not support his case. It would seem scarcely credible, for instance, that any one should undertake a serious life of Campion without familiarity with the State Papers of the time, the letters that passed between Madrid, the Vatican, the Spanish ambassador in London, Cardinal Allen of Douai, Father Parsons, Dr. Nicholas Sanders, and the others of the 'Spanish party' among the English Catholics (which included nearly all the prominent Jesuits abroad). Yet Mr. Waugh shows no signs throughout his book (or in his lists of references) of having read these, or of familiarity with the unceasing plots, intrigues and correspondence that went on about 'the enterprise of England', the plots to invade Britain, murder or depose Elizabeth, and set Philip of Spain on the English throne. The Spanish ambassador wrote continually of his hope to see his Majesty in speedy possession of his realm, that heresy might be extirpated and the Faith restored. English Catholics were absolved from their allegiance, and those who obeyed the Queen's laws put under sentence of anathema by a Bull whose provocative folly caused even Philip and Alva to protest; for, said Philip, 'it will drive the queen and her friends to oppress and persecute the few good Catholics who remain in England'. The English exiles were in perpetual intrigue—'traitors who gape daily for the death of the queen', as an agent wrote home. Madrid and Rome financed and equipped one fruitless invasion expedition after another. Yet Mr. Waugh can write almost as if Catholic plots were an invention of Cecil's. Campion was, indeed, an innocent non-political missionary; but Parsons, his chief colleague in the mission, was steeped, like Dr. Allen, in conspiracy. As an earlier biographer of Campion observes, though Campion himself disapproved of the papal policy, and laboured merely to make every Englishman a Catholic, his friends wished to make every Catholic a conspirator. Allen wrote to the Pope that English Catholics were already

conspirators, and would welcome Catholic invaders of any nation, since they detested their own government more than any foreign prince, and would all join the Pope's army if it landed, and help to depose 'this Jezebel'. Such views were an exile's pipe-dream, of a kind familiar in history: their answer was the English Catholic resistance to the Armada, when nearly all Allen's fifth column let him down. But even the innocent *Campion's* mission was not, as has been pointed out by historians, purely spiritual; indeed, how could it be, since Catholics were contending for more than their lives?

There are other indications of bias (that natural but deadly poison to historians) than the glossing over of the political side of these heroic expeditions. That fanatical religious idealist, Pope Pius V, with his notorious record as Grand Inquisitor, his incitement to murder and war, his rejoicing over the massacre of the Huguenots, is described as a saint; this is surely to debase the currency of words. Then Mr. Waugh's excessive hostility to the Anglican Church leads him too often into inaccuracies, as when he calls it 'the crazy, fashionable Calvinism' (ignoring the incessant war waged against it after the Elizabethan settlement by Calvinists and other Puritans) and repeats several times that it had no sacraments. What he of course means is that, in the eyes of his Church, Anglican sacraments were not valid; but, from the way he puts it, one might not gather that the deluded Anglicans believed that they were, or that they were taught that they 'verily and indeed received the body and blood of Christ' in communion. After all, the Prayer Book was mainly translated (as Milton was to complain bitterly) from Catholic missals, though mutilated; it earned the undying hatred of the Puritan party, who were persecuted under Elizabeth with cruel severity. But Mr. Waugh dislikes this wary *via media* so much that he relegates it to the outer darkness of the Protestant left wing. To dislike the deplorable outrages of the Reformation, and many aspects of the whole business, is natural enough; indeed, it is rather hard not to; but to take ecclesiastical sides is, to a style such as Mr. Waugh's, part of whose charm is in ironic objectivity and detachment, fatal. Partisanship should be left to thunderers; one cannot have it both ways, and something must be sacrificed to individual style.

Though *Campion* is a very readable and often moving book,

and its brave and touching story beautifully told, greater accuracy and balance would have given it a finer urbane polish; as it is, it remains a little one-sided and shrill, and strengthens one's view that its author betrays his gifts when he deserts his own idiom and convention.

Campion is, however, mellowness itself compared with *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936), a blast of triumph over the Italian conquest of that land. Mr. Waugh went to Abyssinia to write of its subjugation for 'the only London paper that seemed to be taking a realistic view of the situation', and to blow a scornful trumpet against the 'whinney of the nonconformist conscience' which had protested against the assault—the same whinney from the same conscience that protested against the Nazis, and is protesting now, though more faintly, against the enslavement of eastern Europe. Mr. Waugh disagreed with this whinney. He found that the Italians had spread order, decency and civilization, that yperite was pretty harmless, though the Abyssinians were 'bored and exasperated with a weapon to which they could make no effective return', that Graziani was a most agreeable man, that along the new Italian roads 'will pass the eagles of ancient Rome, as they came to our savage ancestors in France and Britain and Germany', and that 'the new régime is going to succeed'. He completely failed to grasp the idea behind the League sanctions applied to Italy for its aggression against another League State, and calls the British protests 'peevisish and impolitic remonstrance'.

An odd and rather unchivalrous book. What is its motive? Preference for Italians over Abyssinians? That we most of us share; it should not, but perhaps does, affect the issue. Dislike of black populations? He shows no such dislike in *Remote People*, *Black Mischief*, or *Scoop*. Support of a policy endorsed by the Italian clergy? Very probably. Dislike of the League of Nations? Again, likely enough. Or merely sympathy with the big battalions? If it were that, Mr. Waugh should now be crying up the Russian domination, and he is not. This book must be pronounced a Fascist tract. Sadly we hasten away from it, to the pleasures of *Scoop*. This gay fantasy (published two years later, and also about Abyssinia) is extremely funny, entirely good-tempered, and of considerable brilliance. If any one in it is a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, Mr. Waugh does not mention it; religion does not throw its fatal apple of discord among the *dramatis personæ*; every

one gets fair treatment, every one is ridiculous, and the whole scene of delicious absurdity. With it Mr. Waugh re-entered his peculiar world; it was a relief to those of us who had begun to fear that we were losing him, that the wit was being slain by the propagandist and the partisan. *Scoop* carries an ingenious plot, and a crackling of jokes only a little less good than those of *Decline and Fall*; it is a completely light-hearted *jeu d'esprit*, in which the journalistic and tourist experience gained in Abyssinia is again brilliantly used. It is Mr. Waugh's last novel for four years.

Written in the summer of 1941, *Put Out More Flags* is a war novel. The rejection of temptations, such as patriotism and public spirit, is creditable, and almost, but not quite, complete. The central character, the iniquitous Basil Seal, is more ingeniously corrupt than ever, making his fortune out of blackmail and evacuees, and alighting for a time in the Ministry of Information, that quarry for wits, where he ruins a friend and appropriates his possessions. The whole composition is gay, heartless, neat and amusing. It stands on the border between fantasy and actuality.

After it (published the same year, with a preliminary note that it dealt with a world now dead and would never be finished) came a perfectly serious fragment of a novel called *Work Suspended*. Mr. Waugh said that it was his best writing up till then. He is right that it is well written: he always (or nearly always) writes well. It is carefully composed; it lacks the earlier sparkle; it has a seriousness of tone that might or might not have been fully justified by its theme as it developed: it did not develop, so we cannot know. In spite of a fine and delicate vein of comedy (the hero's artist father and the commercial traveller who ran him down and killed him, are both charming figures of fun), there is a sobriety, almost a solemnity, of mood that foreshadows that of *Brideshead*. Lucy, the grave young heroine, is presented with restraint, and with a new subtlety of emotion, composed and near-profound, at times a little Jamesian in slant. The style is quiet and full. That it was not finished one feels a loss. It was an experiment, a study, abandoned, in a new *genre*; it seems, fragment though it is, to have balance and perspective; and the key is low; if ecstasy should develop, one does not feel that it would necessarily be flamboyant. It might (or possibly not) have justified its author as a straight novelist. But it shows the warning red—or perhaps only amber—lights.

Between suspending this work and writing *Brideshead Revisited* (in 1944), Mr. Waugh underwent development. The baroque became flamboyant; the style curved and flowered; sentimentality at times cushioned it; a grave lushness bloomed. Not continuously, but at intervals, emotionalism, over-brimming the theme, swamped it. The era of brilliant farce was over; the circus was deserted. Irony and humour still remained; there are in *Brideshead* wit of character and some sharply drawn comic scenes; there is also much subtly precise and intelligent writing; but it flowers too often into an orchidaceous luxury of bloom that, in a hitherto ironic wit, startles and disconcerts. Love, the English aristocracy, and the Roman Catholic Church, combine to liquefy a style that should be dry. Like *Work Suspended*, the story is told in the first person; a mode that affords opportunities too tempting for romantic soliloquy. The Oxford section is good, its characters excellently suggested (rather than drawn), its atmosphere authentic, its period the lavish 'twenties. To each character a real-life model or two is (probably wrongly) attributed by sapient readers, always more anxious than authors for the *roman à clef*. Sebastian Flyte, mentally below normal, drunk, silly, of touching beauty, potentially a saint, has an odd, improbable existence of his own; his equally beautiful, less saintly sister Julia, on the other hand, belongs to the realms of fantasy, one might almost say of the novelette; Lady Marchmain is better, because less romanticized; Lord Marchmain will pass for a rakish eloped father and husband, until his deplorable deathbed; their elder son is a cleverly imagined puritan fantastic. None of them has the sharp actuality of some of the minor and more plebeian figures—stray undergraduates (in particular the sophisticated homosexual), the common Lieutenant Hooper, who excites the acid snob-distaste of the narrator and of Mr. Waugh, Mr. Samgrass the don, a portrait etched with dislike and wit, the narrator's scoffing father, the amiable Glasgow-Irish priest with his cheerful pertinacity, the more elaborate portraits of the Canadian millionaire and the arty, gushing wife. About the Flytes there remains to the end something phoney: they belong to a day-dream, to a grandiose world of elegance and Palladian grace, a more than mortal ecstasy. Their conversation is at times incredible; Julia's monologue about her 'sin' on pages 251-3; Lord Marchmain's about his ancestors on his deathbed; some other passages, which flower up from naturalism like exotic purple

plants in a hot-house. Some of these purple passages concern love, some a romantic memory, some sin, some religion, some food and drink (which are treated with intense and almost mystical earnestness; a good meal in a restaurant becomes a sacred rite). Mr. Waugh has been charged with snobbishness. I would rather call it self-indulgence in the pleasures of adolescent surrender to glamour, whether to the glamour of beauty, food, rank, love, church, society, or fine writings. For example, love:

'So at sunset I took formal possession of her as her lover. It was no time for the sweets of luxury; they would come, in their season, with the swallow and the lime flowers. Now, on the rough water, as I was made free of her narrow loins and, it seemed now, in assuaging that fierce appetite, cast a burden which I had borne all my life, toiled under, not knowing its nature—now, while the waves still broke and thundered on the prow, the act of possession was a symbol, a rite of ancient origin and solemn meaning.'

And dinner:

'I remember the dinner well—soup of *oseille*, a sole quite simply cooked in a white wine sauce, a *caneton à la presse*, a lemon soufflé. At the last minute, fearing that the whole thing was too simple for Rex, I added *caviar aux blinis*. And for wine I let him give me a bottle of 1906 Montrachet, then at its prime, and, with the duck, a Clos de Bère of 1904. . . . The cream and hot butter mingled and overflowed separating each glaucous bead of caviar from its fellows, capping it in white and gold. . . . The soup was delicious after the rich blinis—hot, thin, bitter, frothy. . . . The sole was so simple and unobtrusive that Rex failed to notice it. We ate to the music of the press—the crunch of the bones, the drip of blood and marrow, the tap of the spoon basting the thin slices of breast. . . . I rejoiced in the Burgundy. How can I describe it? . . . This Burgundy seemed to me, then, serene and triumphant, a reminder that the world was an older and better place than Rex knew, that mankind in its long passion had learned a better wisdom than his. By chance I met this wine again, lunching with my wine merchant in St. James's Street, in the first autumn of the war; it had softened and faded in the intervening years, but it still spoke in the pure, authentic accent of its prime and . . . whispered faintly, but in the same lapidary phrase, the same words of hope.'

And the season:

'Some said it was the most brilliant season since the war, that

things were getting into their stride again. Julia, by right, was at the centre of it. . . . Foreigners returning on post from their own waste lands wrote home that here they seemed to catch a glimpse of the world they had believed lost for ever among the mud and wire, and through those halcyon weeks Julia darted and shone, part of the sunshine between the trees, part of the candle-light in the mirror's spectrum, so that elderly men and women, sitting aside with their memories, saw her as herself the blue-bird.

'“ ‘Bridey’ Marchmain's eldest girl,” they said. “Pity he can't see her tonight.”’

'That night and the night after and the night after, wherever she went, always in her own little circle of intimates, she brought to all whose eyes were open to it a moment of joy, such as strikes deep to the heart on the river's bank when the kingfisher suddenly flames across dappled water.

'This was the creature, neither child nor woman, that drove me through the dusk that summer evening, untroubled by love, taken aback by the power of her own beauty, hesitating on the steps of life; one who had suddenly found herself armed unawares; the heroine of a fairy story turning over in her hands the magic rings; she had only to stroke it with her finger-tips and whisper the charmed word, for the earth to open at her feet and belch forth her titanic servant, the fawning monster who would bring her whatever she asked, but bring it, perhaps, in unwelcome shape.'

And the ramblings of the dying marquis:

'They dug to the foundations to carry the stone for the new house; the house that was a century old when Aunt Julia was born. Those were our roots in the waste hollows of Castle Hill, in the brier and nettle; among the tombs in the old church and the chantry where no clerk sings.

'Aunt Julia knew the tombs, cross-legged knight and doubled earl, marquis like a Roman senator, limestone, alabaster and Italian marble; tapped the escutcheons with her ebony cane, made the casque ring over old Sir Roger. We were knights then, baronets since Agincourt, the larger honours came with the Georges. They came the last and they'll go the first; the barony descends in the female line. . . .'

All these passages, and others, might have been pilloried in bland ridicule in the earlier novels—in Lord Copper's newspapers, for instance, along with the finny creatures plashing their lush way through the reeds.

It is part of the adolescent approach, too, to mistake a part for the whole; this, I think, Mr. Waugh does in *Brideshead*, and it gives just the effect of triviality which should have been avoided in a book alleged to be 'an attempt to trace the workings of the divine purpose in a pagan world'. No purpose can well have greater importance; no faith can be more worth asserting than that 'the human spirit, redeemed, can survive all disasters'. But Mr. Waugh seems to equate the divine purpose, the tremendous fact of God at work in the universe, with obedient membership of a church; the human spirit, if redeemed, must loyally conform to this church and its rules. It is perhaps an inevitable view for a sincere Roman Catholic, and it is not for those outside this communion to criticize it; but no less inevitably, it seems to them to reduce the formidable problems of the universe and the human spirit to a level almost parochial. Divine purpose, human redemption, must flow through channels larger than those of any church; the impression is rather of an attempt to pour the ocean into a stoup. The interest in moral issues which, as has been lately said by a critic, must in the end impose itself again on novelists, transcends (even if it often includes) loyalty to a church: in Mr. Waugh's novel, it is subordinate to and conditioned by this. (Here he differs from that equally convinced Catholic but greater and more sin-haunted moralist, Graham Greene.)

Not only does this concentration on a church narrow the moral issues, but it seems to add a flavour of acrimony, a kind of partisan contempt for other churches, about whose members acid and uncivil remarks are made by persons in the book, voicing, one would say, their author. It is the same belligerent attitude as was shown in *Campion*, but with less excuse, since Protestants and Catholics were in *Campion's* time at war, and enmity may be part of the period approach. They are now at peace; and great civility and respect are shown, at least in this country, towards Catholics by Protestants. Mr. Waugh's answer would perhaps be that other churches, being in schism, are unworthy of civility in return. This rather truculent and acid attitude seems to have developed some years back, showing itself partly in intemperate assaults on the writings of those from whose views he dissented, those who inclined to agnosticism in religion or to the Left in politics. Strangely fierce intolerances and phobias emerged; one gathered that he despised and hated, rather than tolerated,

religious and political dissidents from his own views. Gone is the detachment, and with it the bland, amused tolerance, of the early novels. Belief meant for him hatred of misbelievers; no sympathetic effort to understand their standpoint has been evident, still less the urbane culture which recognizes human error to be distributed among all sections of opinion, including that to which oneself belongs. This is the spirit that shows itself intermittently, and to its detriment, through *Brideshead Revisited*.

Nevertheless, *Brideshead* has remarkable qualities. When not over-written and lush, and too consciously, opulently graceful, its style is admirable; the construction (the story of the past inserted like a long reverie between the present-day beginning and end) effective; there is humour, though it dissolves helplessly before love, the church, or a delicious meal; there are some well-drawn human beings and some good talk. If Mr. Waugh would sternly root out the sentimentalities and adolescent values which have, so deplorably as it seems to many of us, coiled themselves about the enchanting comic spirit which is his supreme asset as a writer, and return to being the drily ironic narrator of the humours of his world and of his lavish inventive fancy, he would thereby increase his stature, he would be not a less but a more serious and considerable figure in contemporary and future letters. His genius and his reputation seem to stand at the crossroads; his admirers can only hope that he will take the right turning. It is possible that he may. The sentimentality that largely vitiates *Brideshead* is a common, perhaps in some degree or another a universal, weakness. There is in nearly every writer, perhaps in nearly every human being, a soft-headed romantic, who will, if allowed, get out of hand. The creature may expend himself while young in writing sentimental verse or sentimental prose; he may thus write himself out. Or he may throughout his master's life lurk, sly and only partly suppressed; in a corner of his soul, giving the pen now and then a quirk, inserting here a lush phrase, there a row of dots, spying pink roses round the porch and blue-birds on the wing, patting life and death into romantic fancy shapes. He may be thrown out early, leaving only a manageable phantom behind; he may remain, a permanent partner, either growing or dwindling in stature. In Mr. Waugh's case, this romantic being, kept well under in earlier life, would seem to have temporarily seized the pen. An unhappy and quite unsuitable partnership, overdue for dissolution.



JACQUES LIPCHITZ: Le Couple. Plaster. 1928-29.



Femme couchée et guitare. Basalt. 1928.



Elle. Bronze. 1931.



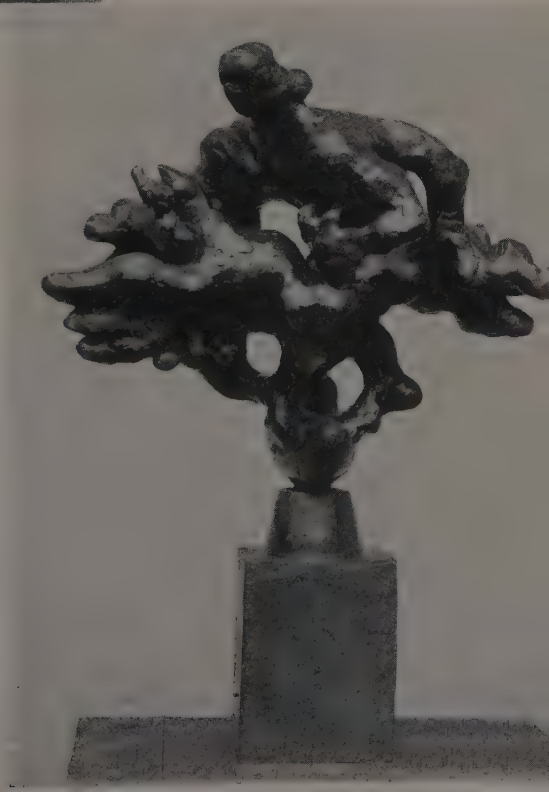
L'enlèvement d'Europe. Plaster. 1938.



Benediction 2.

Bronze. 1942-46.

Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Prometheus.

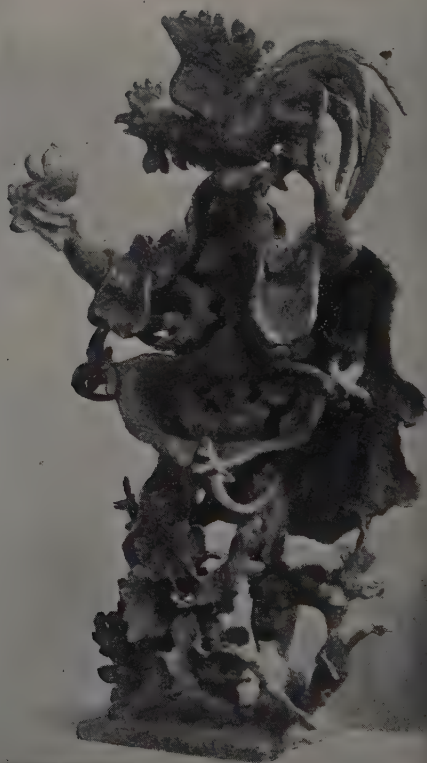
Bronze. 1944.

*Study for Ministry of Education
at Rio de Janeiro.*



Le Pèlerin.
Bronze. 1942.

La Prière.
Bronze. 1943.



JEAN CASSOU

CONTEMPORARY

SCULPTORS: V—LIPCHITZ

AMONG the works of the Cubist period, those of Jacques Lipchitz have a distinguished gracefulness, somewhat reminiscent of Donatello. Bold surfaces, clean lines, and sharp edges erect youthful forms, of which his *Femme à la tresse* of 1914, bent and defined in its geometry, is certainly one of the finest. What an ingenious use the artist has made of the plait of hair which gives the construction its title as well as its axis! In the realm of sculpture, Lipchitz achieved the same work of analysis and of decanting as the painters then achieved in theirs. The aim was to select several objects out of the real world, reduce them to their elementary characteristics and to make them the bases for pure constructions; also the aim of the painters on the two-dimensional surface of their canvases. Lipchitz attempted the same work in the volumes of sculpture. Certainly he remained near the painters' world when he took up bas-relief; at that time, his still-lives resembled those by Juan Gris, Braque and Picasso. But he also knew how to attack space and, in his hands, the Cubist harlequin freed itself of the flat surface, became alive, and spread its angles into three dimensions.

Faces, guitars, sailors, horses and riders acquired form. Curves and volumes fitted into each other and were contrived into solid and elegant objects. The consideration for purity which distinguished Cubism, the desire to put everything in evidence, to make use only of what is clear, to avoid transitions and light and shade, asserted itself in the complete shapes around which you could turn. Soon Lipchitz became more aware of his own vocation and of all the demands of his profession as a sculptor. He had taken his first lessons as a sculptor from the painters, but it was necessary for him to become a sculptor, a necessity demanded both by his nature and by his talent. He started out to conquer space and, aided by his gifts, sculpted works which themselves implied the conquest of space, journeys into space, impetuousness and flight.

In the same way, the poets advocating pure poetry give their work a subject which is poetry itself. They make poetry at the same time as they describe and reproduce it. Of Lipchitz we can say that he created real sculpture from that moment when he began to be really conscious of himself.

His forms have twisted, stood up, and stretched themselves into space, and the titles he gave them, the subjects he chose, and the meanings with which he endowed them, could only refer to the power of the bird and of its wing, to the way in which it works and to everything which is descriptive of its grip, open-hearted and magnificent love of life, sensual desire, and lively energy. They are enormous constructions which need the open air to assert their size. Those collectors who have commissioned him with works for a prominent place in their gardens have been well advised and really in sympathy with this artist's talents. In this direction, the years which Lipchitz has just spent in America have been extremely beneficial for him. For there he discovered a virgin space which is not yet overcrowded. His own inspiration coincided with all the energy of a civilization in possession of a new continent on which to spread itself, whose architecture has something organic and inevitable. Over there, like nature, monuments are born out of the ground. And both monuments and nature show up with an impact, in extraordinary dimensions. It is just a question of birth. To be born: this is the need expressed in Lipchitz' works. To be born and to grow up without restriction and almost without anyone around except for creatures who are equally free and powerful.

All the forms composing these works are simple and clear, reduced to their essential, to their basic truth. And as they soar to the furthest point of their development, they finish by creating a simple and clear construction of huge dimensions. They take up a considerable space. For this reason the gaps they enclose must themselves be simple and clear and must assume an equal importance in the whole. These works are not by any means solids, but constructions which take the air into account and cut out of it living correspondences. A projecting curve of black bronze plays with the space it has created which, in its turn, creates inter-relationships with a life of their own.

In this way quite a new idea of the monumental is created. Lipchitz' art breaks away from statuary form—that which can be

placed more or less anywhere—but returns to the rule of architecture, which means that it conforms to the conditions of a site and of an horizon. It is an architectural sculpture, almost plant-like in the sense in which it imposes its growth and impulse. A dynamic sculpture. Amongst the most recent works, it is no surprise to discover a whole series of small bronzes in which this natural, physical and plant-like inspiration is particularly marked. In them a budding and prickly *chinoiserie* is mixed in with elements borrowed from the animal world, from the regular and symmetrical wonders of the skeleton, from its bones and their joint formations. And so we may claim that this apparently abstract art is really close to nature. It resembles nature in its essential secret and at that point at which it sets its forces into play. These are the forces comprising Lipchitz' vocabulary, the forces he associates or opposes, the forces he makes use of. His works derive from mechanics as well as from nature; the same laws hold good for one as for the other, and it is a commonplace of speech to compare a locomotive to a bull or to the ocean. Lipchitz' sculpture makes use of common denominators which calculate the action of these different varieties. It is the mathematics of a mythology.

During these last years, this refined and systematic art has returned to the solid. Perhaps we should see in this a desire to become more human, or, if you wish, for figuration, like a desire for contact with the soil on which we are stuck. Massive and protruding forms have appeared on which shadows play. Many drawings evocative of the tragic style of Daumier or of Michelangelo have accompanied this return to the earth. This is shown in the compact and twisted monsters and in groups portraying the conception of struggle. For, in Lipchitz, struggle is always present. But instead of converging towards space and leaping from thence into flight, it symbolizes the struggle we can carry on here in our bodily and temporal life, and it takes place on our familiar earth, and incorporates itself into our circumstances and tendencies. For, for some years, Lipchitz has been obsessed with the Prometheus myth and with the image of his fight against the vulture. He was also forced to return to the events of our time: they were tragic and widespread enough to demand the attention of all well-meaning hearts. In our time, history has been offered the spectacle of the most terrible of fights. And in this

struggle all men were involved as they have never been in any other. An artist whose mind was a theatre of a whole drama of forces, was obliged to reconcile this drama with that which had at last broken out in the world and in which he became an actor, along with everyone else. This is the fight he has reproduced in his innumerable works on the theme of *Prometheus*. His forms are no longer ciphers but man struggling with the beast, both made of clay, freeing themselves of the clay which is holding them back and enclosing them, and challenging each other. It is no longer the illumination of the mind nor that of the immense sky above which gives them shape but the light which brushes over the earth and which shows up the quivering muscles and hips. Today the victory of intelligence assumes this savage, down-to-earth and hand-to-hand aspect.

Lipchitz' first figure of the struggle of Prometheus was set up in Paris in front of the Palais de la Découverte at the time of the 1937 Exhibition. There could have been no more suitable site than the entrance to this temple to modern science and its latest exploits. Over the entrance was carved the magnificent phrase from the *Discours de la Méthode* in which René Descartes, father of humanism, asserts the possibility for man to become master and possessor of nature. Prometheus was winning a victory over the material. At the same time it foretold the war in which man was to find himself involved against Nazism which denies man. This powerful group evoked violent protestations from a public as little favourable to æsthetic innovations as it was insensitive to the representation of a struggle whose significance it was reluctant to understand. But the war came and spread over the whole planet and the Prometheus myth still occupies the thoughts of the artist as well as those of everyone else.

Lipchitz is a true contemporary, who, from his first appearance, has imposed on sculpture the daring and extreme style which must express our time. Forceful, deliberate and serious, with these precise and new ideas, he is continually fulfilling his career, considering his profession, and listening to that powerful voice inside him which always carries him towards what the poet Apollinaire called 'the most spirited art'. Only the most spirited art deserves to honour this period with its monuments and to express an epoch with all the significance of which a true artist has been conscious.

[Translated by PETER WATSON]

HALLAM TENNYSON IN THE DESERT...

'Vultures in a brassy sky
Starving cur and carrion fly—
Theirs this aching land where I
Nothing own save memory.'

G. B. THW

'The desert was made for prayer.'

(Arab saying)

THE large infantry training centre at which I was stationed was situated about half a mile from a salt river, which separated us from a strip of British-mandated territory, and forty miles from a fairly large town. But not being allowed to bathe in the river for fear of dysentery or to go into the town because of the incidence of cholera, typhus and the plague, and being several thousand miles from any battle-front, we were able not only to live in as leisurely and purposeless a fashion as our military commitments allowed, but to take a minimum of interest in our surroundings.

It goes without saying that none of us had wanted to come to the desert, and that once there, in the belief that thus we would be able to escape with the least possible damage to our characters and would the more easily be able to pick up our lives where we had left them, we unconsciously directed all our emotional energy to guarding ourselves against contact with our environment. Of course, there were three or four of us (Briggs, the corporal in charge of the officers' mess, was an example) who, being lazy and self-sufficient and with few emotional interests behind them, took to desert life easily and naturally enough.

They showed an ungrudging cheerfulness towards the Arabs, grew fat, regarded their companions with an amused and compassionate detachment, and on their days off did not hanker uncertainly after occidental excitements but slept naked under a fly-net, their eyes shaded by a half-read, paper-covered novel. There was even a sergeant who fought to stimulate an intellectual interest in his surroundings. At first, I was told—for he had been there some time before I came—he used to do extravagant things like getting out of bed at five-thirty to watch the desert sunrise, but later he turned to collecting stones, keeping a record of the

various insects that he came across or wandering into the blue after desert cacti. Finally he started to study sand formations, declaring that he would soon be able to forecast the weather from them as easily as a bedouin recognizes camel-tracks. It must be admitted that in general the rootlessness, the stubborn refusal to develop the negative of experience shown by the rest of us, had a demoralizing effect on our characters. Regularly once a month we had an attack of 'desert blues', when we stumbled about angry, humiliated and miserable, the blanched twilight of consciousness in which we were training ourselves to live suddenly invaded by lurid shadows. When in this condition, our pals treated us with a knowing patience that only made us more aggrieved. Moreover, when we were actually forced into contact with local life, a strange irritation and resentment (in most of us betrayed by an arrogance, a tightness of lip, in a few by acts of petty violence towards the natives employed on camp buildings and in the various messes) seemed to break through the stoical passivity of our minds. Our hearts indeed grumbled and whined a good deal against their imprisonment. The wheel had come full circle, for however unrecognizably, the desert was tampering with our emotions.

In the camp I worked in the native employment office under a certain Lieut. Thursby. I was the sole member of his staff and acted as his clerk.

At the time I was a lance-corporal. Thursby had been in the camp for six months, ever since it had opened as a training centre. I had come only two months before with the second batch of trainees. Thursby was a slightly built man of about thirty-five. His face oval with a small mouth and small, deep-set eyes of a clear, babyish blue and hair of sandy grey. It was the sort of face which in old age is scored with innumerable wrinkles and unaccountable horizontal lines and yet never loses an immature, almost childish prettiness as if it was just this immaturity which had left it without safeguards against the ravages of time and experience. His voice was curious. Silky and high-pitched, it invariably fell at the end of his sentences on to a querulous, puzzled note. Nor do I remember him meeting the eyes of anyone with whom he was talking (unless of course they were natives; for these he could attack with a merciless stare). When he was talking to me as I sat behind my desk beneath the window ledge on which we were in the habit of keeping a vase of desert grasses, his eyes used to rest unblinkingly

on this vase: for the three or four days after the last of the local desert grasses had withered and the vase had been removed, how unhappily his eyes searched the room for another object to occupy their attention, while I with malicious amusement kept my own fixed firmly on his face! At home he had started a successful hat business in Luton, which his wife—a solid, florid, capable and very kindly looking woman judging from the photographs he showed me—was looking after in his absence. From his business, which, he was never tired of pointing out, had given him invaluable experience in dealing with all types of human material, he gave the impression of having made quite a small fortune, modestly adding that any success he had had was as much due to the help and acumen of his wife as to anything else. He was certainly enormously proud of both.

Looking back now it seems obvious enough that Thursby was a type very different from the majority of his fellow officers. His weedy physique, typist's stoop and nervous habits alone ought to have given the lie to his features and told one that he did not share their self-confident, public-school attitude to life. But Thursby was the last person to arouse analytical curiosity. Indeed I believe that if anybody had thought of asking me what I made of him I would have laughed and, with perhaps an exclamation of 'Oh, he's all right', pushed the question out of my mind as somehow irrelevant.

This would have been unfair of me because towards myself Thursby was always unusually friendly, buying me things from the officer's bar which he knew we could not get from the other ranks' canteen, and showing a particularly kindly interest in what I disclosed of my family and private life.

Our work in the office was concerned chiefly with the engaging of casual labour for the various jobs of construction and road-mending round the camp. This we did through an employment agency in the town, obtaining labour in quantities enormously in excess of the amount really needed and paying them each about 1s. 9d. a day. The poverty and almost total unemployment in these non-cultivable areas made such a system practical and economic from our point of view.

One day I remember we had been particularly busy, as several lorry-loads of fresh workers had come in during the morning and the usual routine of clothing disinfestation had had to be gone

through (some of the Arabs not unnaturally protesting at being left naked for a whole hour in the open air, as it was one of the desert's few sunless days and there was an uncomfortably chilly breeze blowing). Afterwards some of them had collected outside the office, as they had heard that they were to be paid several pennies a day less than the employment bureau in the town had promised them. This was a little ruse that we had thought out with the bureau in order to make the obtaining of labour easier. But we liked to keep the unwelcome realization from the Arabs themselves until they were actually paid on discharge and nobody knew how it had got around so early this time. Faces looked in at the window, scarred, emaciated and diseased faces, though some of them retained remarkably handsome features; they grinned with a little nervous diplomacy, showing carious, decayed teeth. A few of them looked in at our door.

'What the hell do you think you're doing in here? Get out at once,' said Thursby, his voice taking on the sharp, irritated, slightly whining note which it always had when he addressed natives. But one of them bolder than the rest, who could speak some English, pattered into the room on his bare feet.

'Dees no good, sare. We cold at baths, no clothes. We not 'nough pay.' There was not a trace of insolence in his voice. He smiled ingratiatingly. He was only pleading, attempting like a beggar to turn his complaint into a subtle form of flattery. His comrades supported him in voluble Arabic from behind. Thursby got up and snatched his baton threateningly from his desk. The Arabs cantered away, their tattered robes blowing out behind them and outlining their emaciated bodies.

Thursby locked the door. A few minutes later the Arabs returned and quietly sat down outside our hut, waiting to be picked up to start work.

When the sergeant came to fetch them some time later, Thursby called out to him through the window—over the heads of the Arabs who had risen instinctively as soon as the sergeant was in sight:

'Sergeant, why the hell did you let these bloody wogs loose on me?'

'Sorry, sir, they must have got away from the disinfestation without my knowing. They're a shifty lot these, I'm afraid. They seem to have got to hear of the wages business.'

'Well if they give any trouble, they can go. I'm fed up to the teeth with the lot of them.'

'Yes, sir.' The sergeant touched his cap. 'Get along now all of you.' His voice had changed to a tyrannous growl. He waved his stick and the Arabs scampered away towards the lorries, jostling against one another for positions.

'Look at them. Like a flock of filthy, bloody sheep.' Thursby spoke in his usual mild voice. A few minutes later the lorries were started up and the Arabs were driven away singing the chorus that Arab labour squads in our area always sing when going to work.

'Give me London's cats any time,' said Thursby, and I agreed, for I knew nothing of eastern music and the apparently monotonous rhythms of this song displeased me. Later on I learned the words that they were singing:

'How many nights? . . . Six nights.

How many days? . . . Seven days.

Ah, give me my pipe and my camel,

I want to go back to my own country.'

A simple and moving enough expression of the bedouin's unhappiness since the life of poverty and freedom was exchanged for the life of poverty and slave labour, but before it had been translated for me I found it sinister and unpleasant enough. I believe I almost imagined it to be some cruel and primitive battle-cry.

I settled down to the task of running through the index of the new workers and making out wage estimates. I knew that Thursby's remarks would have a bitter edge to them for the rest of the day and that he would seize every possible conversational opportunity to curse the country in which we were stationed and complain of its incompetence, decadence and corruption.

For all his alleged indifference to his surroundings, these mornings seemed strangely to upset his equilibrium.

I prepared a mood of tactful sympathy in advance. Intellectually I would have admitted without question (though there were few enough among us likely to have made me do so) that the backward social conditions of the Arabs were explicable in terms of geography, economics, history, etc., but this did not for a moment imply that I felt my fellow feelings impinged upon in any way. I regarded local life with as complete an indifference as any one, considering the vehemence shown against it, by those like Thursby, simply the outcome of a lack of self-control. I remained silent while I listened to them threatening and fuming, smugly

congratulating myself on my better balanced temperament. Looking back now I am ashamed to realize that in fact I secretly enjoyed their outbursts and wonder whether after all those like me were not the real sadists.

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Later that afternoon two Arabs arrived from the town. We had asked for them as replacements for two of the staff of the officers' mess who had been given notice the week before. Hassan was to be chief cook and Mohamed kitchen-boy-cum-waiter. They were apparently close relations. Hassan was a fat man with a perfectly circular face, short, broad nose, a small regular moustache and thick lips. When they first came in and were going through the preliminary negotiations, he stood looking rigidly in front of him, his eyes apparently fixed on some distant spiritual goal, his hands folded benevolently on his stomach and a slight smile on his face, as if all these details of earthly procedure were vastly insignificant to him. When he had grasped the terms on which he was being engaged, his smile broadened into one of bewildered but good-humoured condescension and turning his little, almond-shaped eyes to Thursby (he was standing to the side of Thursby's desk) but keeping his head and body in the same rigid position as if his eyes were only to be temporarily side-tracked from their spiritual quest, he launched into an exposition of the reasons why he considered the wages that they were being offered totally insufficient. He started by detailing the number of positions he had held before and the high quality of all his references. He then proceeded to complain about the prohibitive market prices in the country and was just beginning to enumerate the cost of articles in common use when I looked up amazed that Thursby had not already interrupted him with considerable violence. The reason was, I saw, that he was busily engaged on the necessary employment and pass-forms—a job usually reserved for me—and apparently entirely oblivious of Hassan's interminable discourse. I caught Mahomed's eye and could not repress a slight smile to which Mahomed replied with a friendly grin of enormous size. He then looked quickly at his finger-nails and his feet in apparent embarrassment—but the grin still remained. At that moment Thursby finished his writing and as he laid down his pen and started to blot his documents, said to Hassan in a cold, deliberate voice which I was unaccustomed to hearing him use:

'There's no need to go on drivelling like that. Either you work here at the wages I've told you or else you go straight back to where you came from'—and then catching sight of Mahomed he suddenly raised his voice—'and as for you, you cheeky little brat, you can bloody well wipe that grin off your face. I'm having none of that nonsense in here.' Mahomed, who could not speak a word of English, merely gave a low chuckle and stepped backwards with a movement of lithe good-humoured deference. Thursby jumped up and seized his baton. The dignified Hassan moved to the door with an unexpected agility, Mahomed after him. When they were gone Thursby stood by his desk tidying his papers. His fingers were trembling a little. Suddenly he muttered:

'And these are the sort of bastards whose children one's wife sends sweets for.'

I did nothing to defend the two Arabs for, although in this particular case I thought that he was being unjust, my tactful deference towards officers had become almost instinctive after the two months I had spent working directly beneath one. But I wondered at the bitterness of Thursby's remark. He spoke without a trace of the affectionate, and even half-admiring, disparagement that men use when referring to the sentimentality of their women-folk.

What extraordinarily uninformative, even untruthful letters he must have been writing to the wife whom he idolized so much. I thought of the lazy repetitive scrawls sent home by the other ranks. Did they give an equally false impression of desert life? The idea of Thursby distributing sweets to Arab children was certainly incongruous. How our mess would laugh when I told them.

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Mahomed and Hassan settled into their jobs quickly. Mahomed's smile and efficiency making him a favourite in the officers' mess—though Thursby found quite a powerful minority to agree with him that he was a 'damn sight too cheeky'. Hassan carried out his duties with gravity and a look of settled contentment and self-esteem on his face. He took no part in the quarrels that enliven the dull routine of kitchen life in the desert; though after they had subsided he often picked on one of the losers and complained quietly and insistently about his work to Briggs during the next two or three days.

'Please that boy no good, sare. He no understand anything.'

The first week that he came to collect his wages he registered his dissatisfaction with them in the same benevolent way as before, but the second week before he could open his mouth Thursby warned him that if he complained again he would get the sack on the spot, and he kept silent. His piety was very noticeable—all the more so because when in the employment of the British Army Arabs tend to interrupt their usual routine of religious observances. He employed almost to excess the attractive Muslim habit of turning even the busiest and most unsanctified locality into a place of worship. He was often found unrolling his prayer-mat in the vegetable room just as it was due to be scrubbed or turning towards Mecca in the pantry during meals, when all the waiters were dashing in and out to get at clean plates and serving spoons.

Once he was seen at the oven, his eyes heavenward and his lips forming some of the ninety-nine names of Allah, while the custard that he was stirring boiled over underneath. Above all he kept rigidly to the Muslim food restrictions, refusing all meat as he could not be sure that it had been killed in the orthodox manner. He used to explain these restrictions to Briggs, giving long-winded explanations of Muslim dietetics and combining them in an artless and deprecating way with complaints about the poor condition of his stomach and his continual migraine. Briggs smiled at his delicacy in refusing to make any overt request and afterwards, as native rations were, at their best, a bit meagre, used to slip him a bit of cheese or a tin of sardines, making sure that other members of the staff did not see him and resent it. One morning, after they had been at work about a month, the telephone bell rang in our office.

It was a military policeman speaking from his post at the bridge. Apparently Hassan, going into town on his day off, had been caught crossing the river with two tins of cheese bulging blatantly from the pocket of his galabayah.¹

Thursby's pale eyes gleamed and he covered the receiver with his hand to tell me about it.

'The best news we've had for a long time,' and he smiled with innocent pleasure. It seemed that Hassan had protested with some vehemence that he had been given the tins by the mess corporal.

'Oh! Don't take any notice of that, that's just the usual Wog nonsense.'

¹ The long cloak worn by Arabs on all occasions.

Thursby spoke briskly. 'Oh! I daresay, he's the most plausible, hypocritical bugger. Send him to the Wog police station right away and wash your hands of him altogether. It'll do him a power of good to go without a week's pay, so you can tell him that I don't want to see him again here. I wish I could take away more.' He put down the receiver and I was sent off at once to fetch Briggs from the mess kitchen.

Briggs stood looking stolidly in front of him as Thursby told him the news. Thursby spoke in a rather high-pitched, jerky voice and rushed his sentences. His eyes flitted restlessly round the room.

'And to crown it all he had the cheek to tell the police some cock-and-bull story about you having given him the cheese during the last week or so. Would you believe it? And he having not eaten it because of stomach trouble and having saved it to take home to his wife. Just imagine a Wog saving up two pounds of cheese for his wife.' He laughed lightly.

'Well, sir, it may be true.' Briggs had a slow, heavy voice with a north-country accent. He explained Hassan's religious objection to the meat and said that he might quite possibly have given him two tins of cheese during the past ten days, that he hadn't seen him eating them and that, yes, now he came to think of it, Hassan had been complaining more than usually of stomach trouble.

'Well, as I see things I'm afraid you must be simply a fool or else a fool and a liar.' Thursby spoke gently and for a second his eyes rested on Briggs with courteous tolerance.

'It's quite true, sir.'

'And you honestly believed all this nonsense?'

'Well, sir, he's always been a good worker and that's enough for me.'

'But, my dear man, you don't suppose any Wog cares two pins about religion, do you? It was nothing but a cloak to get hold of something he could sell in the town. Taking it home to his wife. I expect he'd sell her as soon as look at her.'

Briggs scratched his head, he seemed puzzled.

'Well, sir, he was one of the best cooks we've ever had in the mess. He's the only one that can speak English, too, sir. I don't like losing him.'

'As far as I'm concerned I don't mind telling you it's a grand piece of news. I've been wanting to sack that man ever since I saw him.'

'I don't think you ought to sack him, sir.'

'I don't give a bugger for what you think. It's a pretty disgusting thing the way you give out our rations to Wogs anyhow; I almost prefer to think that you're lying. But even if what you've said was true he was avoiding the customs, wasn't he? And that's quite enough for me. As far as I'm concerned the whole matter's finished.' He thought for a moment and a suspicion that duty was only levelled on camels and tobacco crossed his mind. 'Anyhow, it would quite upset my routine to re-employ him,' he smiled and fidgeted in his chair, the phrase pleased him. 'Yes, it would upset my routine, upset it completely.'

* * *

That evening after supper Thursby went to speak to Briggs in the mess kitchen. There was the usual hubbub over the washing up, but as soon as Thursby came in all activity was suspended. Plates, knives, forks were held in the air half-dried, mouths opened, eyes protruded. Somehow the kitchen workers had heard rumours of Hassan's possible dismissal and Briggs's stand, and awaited the climax with candid and unabashed interest.

It was rare enough for Arabs to be privileged to see two Englishmen in disagreement.

'Well, Briggs, you gave us a very good dinner in spite of having no head-cook.' Thursby rubbed his hands. After his prompt settling of the whole affair he felt he could afford to be ingratiating and conciliatory. He turned his face away as he spoke and fixed his eyes intently on the shelf of cooking utensils by the side of which they were standing. 'I'm very sorry about our disagreement today, you know. I hope we won't let it spoil our respect for each other. I appreciate a man who sticks up for what he believes to be right before an officer. I appreciate him—some people don't, I know—however much I disagree with his views. You mustn't think that I treat these people unfairly. I was as soft-hearted as you at first but when you've had my experience of the native mind you just get fed up with the whole damn thing and realize that rough treatment is all that pays. Our wives might get a bit of a shock, but it isn't a woman's job. It's no use being sentimental. You'll learn how right I am before very long.'

'Oh! mahlsh,¹ sir, mahlsh'; it was decent of Thursby to behave like this. Briggs had expected to be reported to the C.O. He was pleased at his escape and knew that not many officers

¹ Arab, meaning 'all right'.

would have been so lenient. At that moment he caught sight of Mahomed who was standing in the middle of the room over the stove which, noiselessly and symbolically, he had been pretending to scrub while watching the two of them out of the corner of his eye. Just then he had stopped movement of all kind and was staring at them quite frankly and openly. Briggs winked and Mahomed, confused, bent down to scrub in real earnest—but not before he had let out a deep rich gurgle of laughter. Thursby spun round.

‘What the hell do you think you’re grinning at, you cheeky little brute?’

‘I’ve had just about enough of your nonsense. Yes, it’s you I’m speaking to and you needn’t gape at me in that innocent way, either. You can bloody well come and collect your pay tomorrow and hop it after Hassan. You probably had as much to do with all this business as he had, anyhow. I’m afraid you’ve got a lot to learn yet, Briggs. It’s all very well this nonsense about giving Wogs a square deal and treating them as if they were human beings. The sooner you learn that they’re a lot of bloody animals the better for all concerned.’

He stalked out of the room followed by about a dozen pairs of round excited eyes. The Arabs’ hopes had not been disappointed.

* * *

It was about eight nights later that the excitement started. At breakfast the next morning two officers swore to having woken up in the middle of the night and seen an Arab figure silhouetted in the door-flap of their tents.

Both had shouted ‘*Impshi*’ in those tense ringing tones that only white men addressing the coloured can command, and the two figures had silently obeyed. Thursby told me about it in the office later in the morning.

‘I always knew the colonel ought to have arranged for us to have a guard on at night,’ he said. Apparently he had already made the suggestion to him as tactfully as possible.

That evening the weather that had given us, for about a fortnight, an unbroken succession of hot, windless spring days began to change. The desert mist so curiously reminiscent of the chemical haze that hangs over big industrial towns, darkened the atmosphere and a ground wind began to restlessly harry the sand, the surface grains scuffling and scurrying after it and occasionally

lifting themselves in little heaps into the air and breaking into a fine scudding spray. The sun, its white light absorbed into the mist, throbbed on the horizon like an infected wound. Everyone recognized the symptoms of the 'Hamsin' the tempestuous wind that scourges the desert two or three times every spring.

Tent-pegs were secured, flaps knotted over tightly, shutters put into place and the doors in the stone buildings barricaded. There was general thankfulness that the wind was beginning at night as such attacks rarely lasted till later than three o'clock the next morning. All prepared in silence to glaze themselves against their surroundings—the smoother the surface the less the sand sticks! Like invalids they curled their souls up inside them and prepared, for the next few hours, to abandon all responsibilities. As soon as possible, after shouting trivial conversations above the clattering of doors and windows and picking at a plateful of sandy food, what remained of their mental energy would be drugged in sleep. As had been hoped, the storm did not last later than two or three o'clock, and the officers at breakfast the next morning seemed unusually cheerful and refreshed. However, disturbing rumours soon drifted through from the women's compound (for there was a group of tents and a mess set aside for the use of members of the women's nursing services in transit further east or south, which was kept completely separate and which for that night had had about thirty occupants). It appeared that during the storm one woman had woken up screaming, certain that she had felt a hand reaching through the window-flap towards her head. In the next tent the scream had woken up another woman, who in her turn had become convinced that someone was crawling about the floor. No less than two other women had confessed to being woken by intruders—one had felt her counterpane pulled, the other her bed knocked. It was noticeable that nobody had actually seen anything, as the storm, apart from making the night pitch-black, had necessitated the closing of all the tent-flaps. At first the officers' mess was rather inclined to be sceptical.

But then Thursby disclosed that there had been somebody in his tent during the night and that as he had no torch he had got out of bed and blindly groped his way after him in the dark. Apparently the intruder must have heard him because he had escaped before he could be grabbed hold of.

At this disclosure Captain Baker, who shared the tent with Thursby, looked up from reading a paper and smoking a pipe.

'Why didn't you call me?' he said. 'You knew I had a torch.'

'I did, but you must have been too fast asleep.'

Baker was surprised, unlike most people he had been awake through the storm and was sure that he would have heard Thursby stumbling about.

'It seems very unlike Arabs to go gadding about during a Hamsin,' was all he said, and returned quietly and independently to his paper. But somebody else supported Thursby by saying that he had heard a strange and suspicious noise outside his tent and wouldn't be at all surprised if some local scoundrels hadn't been making special use of the weather to cover their raiding activities. Opinion began to harden and consternation to grow. The conviction expressed by someone that 'the Wogs are after our women' had a decisive, almost an exhilarating effect. The colonel agreed to have guard duty started that very night and later accepted the suggestion, which Thursby made to him privately, that an Arab tracker should be brought in secretly and under guard for at any rate the next two nights until the Arabs working round the camp should get to know that he was there and warn the neighbouring villagers. Thursby seemed in a mood of nervous elation throughout the day, though, in telling me the precautions that the camp had taken, this was suitably tempered by an air of 'grim purpose'.

'I admired Briggs's and your attitude in a way, but this will show you what you're really up against,' he repeated several times. I was amused to think that he should confuse my indifference with Briggs's natural humanity.

'I don't think I've ever been particularly blind to the Arabs' weaknesses,' I said.

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That evening, following mess tradition, a large party of officers grouped themselves round the bar after supper to celebrate the end of the Hamsin. They began with whispered dirty stories in the usual fashion and then, as the group got larger and the drink more abundant, the stories became louder until one finally held the attention of the whole audience at the bar including the four or five people still separated from the rest, who up till then had been talking quietly among themselves.

It moved to its simple climax, every syllable audible, in the small sitting-room, and the last words were quickly engulfed in wave upon wave of laughter, when two ladies who had been in to dinner from the women's compound and who had later been forgotten and left in a murky corner to amuse themselves, suddenly put down the newspapers, behind which they had been trying to save their hosts from embarrassment, and scrambled quickly for a side door. There were a few seconds of hysterical and unsteady silence in which not a single person could trust himself to say goodnight and then, when the ladies were safely outside the door, an enormous towering tidal wave of laughter broke across the room. The men floundered in it helplessly, gripping chairs, mantel-pieces, window-ledges, stretched over tables, over the bar counter, even on the floor. The evening's entertainment was well under way and when the party once more collected round the bar, everyone's wit and sense of fellowship blossomed. They had indeed shared an epic experience together. Baker and Thursby were sitting apart, the only people not at the bar. Soon Baker got up.

'I'm going to bed early tonight,' he said, and tucked his book under his arm. Thursby nodded, he appeared to be absorbed in his own thoughts.

After Baker had gone, several attempts were made to draw Thursby out of himself and into the circle around the bar, but suddenly he stood up and looking straight ahead of him, walked out of the room. 'Desert blues' was the only comment. Thursby went at once to the nearest guard-post to find out if any suspicious activity had been noticed, whether the tracker had come and where he was sleeping, then he started to walk round the camp to reassure himself still further. Soon he heard some Arabs singing and realized that he must be near the tents of the waiters and cooks who worked in the various messes.

He stopped to listen. How horribly the noise seemed to fit in with its surroundings; he shivered, then suddenly became convinced that he was being watched and turned to look behind him. The desert was empty and soundless as usual. Then the singing stopped and he felt sure that he had been seen from the native tents and that somebody was creeping up behind him from that direction. 'They hate intruders,' he thought, and remembered tales of infidels murdered for breaching the sanctity of mosques. He

turned and looked again but again saw no one. 'People move like cats out here,' he muttered aloud. 'I'd better go.' He started to walk quickly away. But now he was sure that everywhere out of sight was peopled with noiselessly creeping figures. He could hardly keep himself from breaking into a run and by the time he reached the officers' mess was quite out of breath. He stopped for a moment to look in at the window. The party had started to sing now. The only light shining was behind the bar, so that the figures grouped round it cast long lurid shadows on to the walls and ceiling. The tune of 'Loch Lomond' curled through the air, sung by a tenor solo with unsure diction and a somewhat painfully executed tremolo. A Scotch officer had put on his kilts and was dancing.

Soon it would be the 'Mountains of Mourne' or 'Little Old Lady Passing By', for these orgies always ended on a note of querulous sentimental nostalgia that would not have frightened a provincial drawing-room.

At the last one a fat infantry captain had collapsed in tears while rendering 'The Rose of Tralee' and had had to be helped to bed by his companions. Thursby leaned back against the wall to recover his breath.

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That night at about two-o'clock a shot rang out from near the officers' compound. Thursby sprang from his bed at once with not a second wasted on bewildered adaptation. The shot seemed only to clinch an argument that he had been engaged on even in his sleep. He lit the hurricane lamp and shook Baker.

'What the hell!' Baker muttered, turning over. Thursby continued to shake him without a word.

'What's the matter?' Baker sat up in bed laconically.

'There was a shot outside just now, there's only one guard on. He may need help.'

'If he wants it he can get it from his pals. The guards' tent is just near . . .' Baker started to argue.

'Very likely he's surrounded by Wogs and won't realize it till it's too late. These people don't know a thing about organized Wog raiding. God knows what the camp would do without someone who cared for its welfare and understood the native mind. I made the Colonel engage a tracker to sleep here the night and arranged for him to come in secretly under guard so that none

of the other Wogs in the camp should find out and let on. They're all bound to be hand in glove with the thieves, so we should get them with a bit of luck.' Baker waited for a minute or two then slowly started to get up. He would much rather have stayed in bed, but Thursby's earnestness was strangely compelling.

'Hurry up!' Thursby was already dressed and had his rifle slung over his shoulder. 'I'll go on ahead and see what the situation is. I should bring your rifle if I were you. We can't have too many.' Baker watched him go out curiously, his behaviour was so authoritative and so unstrained that he could not help feeling that there must be some justification for all the preparations that he had taken, and yet it was certainly strange seeing Thursby, usually so indecisive and fussy, assuming with such promptitude the role of the man of action. When he got outside the group of tents he found Thursby alone.

'I've sent one of the guards to wake the tracker and to call one of his mates, and the other one is doing a round of the whole compound. Can you believe their stupidity? One of them saw a Wog crawling under the barbed wire into the food-stores, and the Wog, hearing him coming, got out and ran away, while all the guard did was to fire into the air "to give him a fright!" Can you think of anything so childish? People out here seem to think that they're playing at Red Indians. However, thank God our Wog left a bit of his galabayah in the fence, so we should be able to settle his hash all right if the tracker's any use.'

'He started towards the river like the idiots they all are and probably won't be able to cross it before morning.'

'Surely five men with rifles and a tracker as well is running it a bit high to catch one native?' Baker asked.

'Oh, we'll only take one of the guards with us and leave a couple behind for safety. But anyhow, you can't be too careful. There may be dozens of Wogs around for all we know, all the biggest scoundrels from the neighbouring villages waiting to swoop down and carry away anything they can lay hands on. Look at the number that were out last night reconnoitring. I've known it happen before and you can do absolutely nothing unless you catch them red-handed and give them hell. To get the local police and the government on to them afterwards is worse than useless—they're probably in league with them anyhow.'

Soon afterwards the guards and the tracker appeared and they

went down to the store. The tracker's dog quickly found the scent and leaving two of the guards behind, the rest started off. The confidence Baker had felt in Thursby's leadership had by now quite evaporated and he cursed himself for not having put a stop to the expedition before it was too late. The moon was full and he could see the expressions on his companion's faces quite clearly. The guard was a heavy laconic Irishman. He walked slightly aloof from the two officers with a sort of deferential scepticism. 'He knows far more about this sort of thing than Thursby does,' thought Baker. 'Why the hell didn't he leave him to manage it as he thought best?' He turned his eyes to Thursby. His lips were parted and there was a look of utter absorption on his face. For the first time Baker thought there was something uncanny about his companion's eagerness. A suspicion of this calmness, this speed of decision which he had shown, crossed his mind. He felt a sudden anxiety to get the situation under his own control.

'There's no need to go so fast. Slow the dog down a bit.' He called out to the tracker in front. At least he could give the wretched thief time to try to escape into a village.

Thursby countermanded his order abruptly.

'Go as fast as you can,' he shouted.

The tracker could speak no English but he turned round, for he knew from force of habit that Englishmen used that particular type of voice only when addressing natives. Thursby started gesticulating and calling to the tracker, but Baker was silent; the sight of the tracker had suddenly struck him dumb.

He had a scarred, emaciated, anaemic face, long black moustaches meticulously waxed at the ends and lips drawn back over large yellow teeth. A white galabayah loosely clothed his lean body, while a small white bonnet such as English children wear at the sea-shore was perched rakishly on his head.

In one hand he held a willowy white whip and in the other the leash from the end of which the enormous hound that led him strained and gasped.

Long afterwards, when the other incidents of that night had almost faded from Baker's memory, the image of the tracker as he saw him then remained with a strange vividness. It seemed almost to become a symbol of the whole nightmarish escapade. Baker's and the tracker's eyes met, but it could only have been for

a second, for all of a sudden the dog, its windpipe almost closed by the collar and leash against which it was straining so hard, began to let out hoarse gasps of excitement and Thursby was shrieking: 'There they are, the black bastards'. Two figures dressed in galabayahs had emerged from behind a sand-dune and were running in the direction of the river. They were about three hundred yards in front. They all broke into a run without a word, their feet pattering softly on the sand. The dog began to slobber great gobs of saliva from its jowl as it tried to increase its speed. The tracker crooned low almost tender words of restraint.

Suddenly Thursby called out.

'Let him go, man, let the dog go!' Then he spurted forward and started to untie the leash round the dog's neck. Baker was after him and gripped him by the belt.

'Stop it, you fool. You don't know what you're doing. Stop it.'

Thursby hit out with his free arm and overbalanced, bringing the tracker down with him. The dog was away at once across the sand. Baker jumped up and unslung his rifle. He started to cram in ammunition.

'No, Pasha, he good. No finish. No, Pasha.' The tracker broke into a flood of Arabic, his face distorted with emotion.

'Call him, you idiot; call him.' Baker waved his hand towards the dog. The tracker apparently understood, for he cupped his hand to his mouth and let out a long cry which, beginning in a low register, ended in a shrill penetrating falsetto. It had something in it of the despair of a mother keening over her dead child. The dog did not flinch, but continued to race in pursuit of his victims. Baker raised his rifle to his shoulder. His eyes met the tracker's who, as he started another agonizing call, put his right hand very deliberately into the pocket of his galabayah.

'Watch him; he's got a knife handy,' Baker muttered to the guard. And then suddenly the dog, without any previous hesitancy or indecision, stopped and sat down some 150 yards from his prey with his ears pricked and his face fixed steadily in front of him. None of the party spoke. Baker lowered his rifle and looked at the tracker, who slowly and with an almost cheerful expression on his face took his hand from his pocket. They pattered on over the sand. The guard was breathing heavily and the tracker counselling patience to his waiting dog.

'We should get them all right without any difficulty. They

should be almost at the river by now.' Thursby spoke in an impersonal, off-hand way. His excitement seemed to have worn off. They reached the dog and the tracker picked up the leash. The dog started off again at once, straining and gasping as before. After they had been going some time they were surprised to see the two fugitives stop and begin to gesticulate. Baker watched them. They must have come to the river, he thought. One of the two was heavy and thick-set. 'He probably can't swim,' thought Baker. Then suddenly the gesticulations stopped; they turned round, looked at one another as if to make sure that they had reached final agreement, and started slowly to walk towards their pursuers. The dog was puzzled and slowed down, and the party **dropped to a walking pace.**

'What the hell do they think they're doing?' muttered Thursby. His excitement seemed to be gripping him again. Suddenly he shook his fist and screamed, 'You bastards'. It was a shrill, crazy scream, like a vulture that has at last found carrion.

'Shut up for God's sake,' Baker said; but Thursby, once more utterly absorbed in watching the approaching figures, seemed **not to hear.**

The two groups must now have been about fifty yards apart. They were walking, almost sauntering, towards one another with **a certain diffidence.**

Baker turned round to the guard and muttered, 'What a bloody farce'. The guard grinned at him broadly, and Baker turned away in sudden confusion and embarrassment. The two Arabs had separated from each other by now, the fat one being several yards to the front and several yards to the right of the other.

'That front one is the cook that used to work in the officers' kitchen, isn't it, sir?' the guard said suddenly. Baker looked closely. The waddle, the hands clasped as support round the protruding stomach, the circular face (even though the features were not yet clearly visible, all unmistakably belonged to Hassan. Could the one behind be Mahomed? Quite apart from the natural association of the two in his mind (for Baker had heard all about their joint dismissal, as had nearly everyone else in the mess), the loose graceful stride seemed familiar to him. But his face was fixed on the ground and identification was not really possible. At that moment and still separated as they were

by several yards, Hassan burst into loud exclamatory self-defence:

'Officer, me not know how Mahomed here.' (So it is Mahomed after all, thought Baker.) 'Me alone coming; me not do anything bad, Officer. Me alone going to village.' His sentences pitched and tossed on a surging sea of righteous indignation, his little almond eyes glistened, he rolled them heavenwards, he pursed his lips, he wiped the sweat off his forehead—with every gesture he made a desperate and grotesque attempt to emphasize his innocence. They had come to a stop now, Mahomed standing several yards behind and apart from the rest. Hassan was still talking, his words trailing behind them the same ludicrous disjointed gestures. Mahomed looked up, to find Thursby glaring at him with the intensity of mania. And then slowly, unbelievably, right over Mahomed's face broke the famous grin. The moon was in front of him and his teeth gleamed queerly in the light. Was it nervousness? It seemed the same warm, confident grin as ever—simplicity of character, vanity, bravado, contempt? Or merely a detached and happy sense of farce?

Baker, apparently listening to Hassan's interminable explanations, was watching Mahomed and interpreting the difference in their behaviour.

Mahomed agreeing to accompany Hassan back when he could probably have swum over the river and escaped; Mahomed smiling in cheerful amusement at the situation while his companion tried to shift all the blame on to his shoulders. It occurred to Baker that he would probably still be grinning even if he understood what Hassan was saying.

'Take that bloody grin off your face, you filthy, slithery little bugger'—Thursby was rigid, every nerve stretched. His voice quivered as if with intolerable pain. Mahomed gave a low chuckle and stepped backwards with that unique mixture of servility, cynicism and a sort of mirthful delight in the movements of his own body. No one could have been more completely unaware of the situation as it presented itself to others or more oblivious of his own danger. Thursby leapt forward, and before Mahomed could move out of the way had sunk his fingers deep into his neck.

'Wog—nigger—black bastard!' He shook Mahomed's head rhythmically in time with the words. 'Bastard—bastard—bastard!' His head was bent down, his feet planted firmly apart;

every fibre of his being seemed trained, harmonized and concentrated to accomplish this single act of destruction. Mahomed's eyes protruded and expanded to an enormous size, his turban fell forward, he thrashed the air feebly with his arms. Baker was already beside them, the butt-end of his rifle lifted over Thursby's arms. Mahomed, thinking the blow was directed at him, let out a gurgle of terror and covered his eyes with his hands.

Thursby's head was still down. The blow fell on his forearms just below the elbows. He jumped back, muttering and rubbing his left arm which had caught most of its force. Mahomed had fainted, and lay motionless on the sand.

Baker expected Thursby to turn on him with furious vindictiveness, but was surprised instead to see him walk off into the desert.

'You'd better stay with us,' he called out unsteadily, and Thursby, without even looking round, lay down on the sand, pillowed his head in his hand and stared vacantly over the desert. Baker rested his chin on his rifle, the guard started to fan Mahomed's face with a pocket-handkerchief, and the tracker went off to get some water from the river, which he brought back in his mouth and sprayed over Mahomed's face in a fine, thin jet. This revived him, and the party set off for the camp. Mahomed was supported between Captain Baker and the guard, while on Baker's side was Hassan, under way once more with his rambling and lop-sided self-justification, and on the other, though several yards apart, was the tracker. Thursby, deflated and shrunken, followed at some distance behind.

'Scuse me, sir, Hassan do nothing bad. Today all something very dear. One trouser he six pound. Me no money, me no job. Officer he take away Hassan's job. All shops very dear for Hassan's wife. Me no understand this; me no treated by English officer like this before. Me work fifteen year for English officer before wartime. 'Scuse me, sir, he tell Hassan do nothing bad.' Every excuse was produced again and again and worked into any number of contradictory combinations, while each inflection of his voice was unctuously laden with humility and innocence. Baker increased his pace; anything to get away from this grotesque and repellent scene, away from the desert, away from his life of the past few months. For the first time since they had started out he looked up at the night sky. It was certainly gloriously

clear. And yet, stretched above such a landscape, it seemed only to insult and confuse the human soul. The moon reflected in some lonely, bitter way the more virile ferocity of the desert sun. A hot, stale breeze fanned his cheeks, and he thought with a smile of London's air-conditioned tubes. 'Oh, God! let me out—let me out of the desert,' his spirit cried. He increased his pace once more.

Hassan's voice still stumbled and scrambled after him, panting with breathlessness at the speed that he was being forced to go. And then abruptly Baker stopped and looked round at the guard and Hassan fluttered despondently into silence, as he at last realized that no one was listening to him.

'Is Mahomed all right, corporal?' Baker spoke in a firm, level tone.

'Yes, I think so, sir.'

'Then we've no need to take them any further. We can leave them here. Keep your mouth shut about what's happened.'

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They had not spoken to one another since they were by the river; Baker was just getting into bed, but Thursby was still sitting on his fully dressed, his head in his hands. Baker was watching him, and when he looked up he hastily avoided his gaze and shifted his eyes to some trivial object further down the wall. Suddenly Thursby muttered:

'I feel like committing suicide.'

Baker was silent as he arranged his sheet and pillow and stretched down his legs. What could he say? His emotions were utterly exhausted and he had no pity left, least of all to waste on Thursby. He lay back looking at the ceiling while Thursby waited, quivering, and licking his dry lips. Suddenly Baker replied casually: 'Well, you've tried twice already tonight, old boy. Maybe I shall be too tired to come to your rescue if you try again.'

An exclamation started to Thursby's lips, but Baker had already drawn his pillow underneath him and turned his face to the tent wall.

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The next day, after Baker had spoken to him, the M.O. suggested to the colonel that Thursby should be transferred from the desert to a job nearer civilization.

'He takes his work too seriously. You're absolutely right. I had noticed something a bit wrong myself recently, you know,' said the colonel. 'I feel sure I can arrange a captaincy to show him there's nothing personal about the move. A most conscientious officer. He deserves it.'

The colonel sent for Thursby that same morning. Apparently the transfer was already fixed, and when he came back to the office he told me about it in short, inconsequential sentences.

'Congratulations on the promotion, sir. You'll be glad to go too, I expect, won't you?' I said cheerfully. But he made no reply. He was leaning back in his chair chewing a yellow wooden pencil in a distracted sort of way. The ferocity of his chewing struck me as rather abnormal—he was tearing large bits off with his teeth and laying them on the table in front of him—but I affected a deferential unconcern and returned to the working out of the office's monthly accounts on which I was engaged at the moment. When I looked up a few minutes later, I was astonished to see that the whole pencil lay splintered and broken on the blotting paper in front of him and that he was fiddling purposefully with the bits as if trying to fit them together again. I realized suddenly that he was a nervous wreck. He turned his eyes to mine.

'Look what I've done!' he seemed to say with a half-smile and a shrug of the shoulders. I plunged my gaze back on to my accounts, though I was quite unable to distinguish anything but a blur of figures. My heart was beating fast. Suddenly I said, without lifting my face and with an assumption of nonchalance:

'My God! it will be a great day when this bloody war ends and we can get back to our wives and children, sir.' What prompted me to make this remark I shall never know. It was certainly ~~not~~ the outcome of any conscious trend of thought or emotion in my own mind at the time. He made no reply, and I looked up covertly to see if it had provoked him to any reaction. His eyes were fixed on me with such intensity that I felt powerless to escape his gaze. Never have I seen such a look of overwhelming misery and humiliation on the face of any man. We held each other's gaze for what must have only been five seconds or thereabouts. In the abominable silence and with our thoughts flashing backwards and forwards it seemed more like fifty. My heart struggled wildly with a longing to help him by some word or

action, but not at this time knowing anything of the story that lay behind his condition, I felt quite unequal to the task of comforting him. Then, overcome by the prosaic terror that he would burst into tears if we looked at one another an instant longer, and thus increase my helpless bewilderment still further, I dropped my eyes once more on to my accounts. Several minutes later he got up to leave the room. I waited till he had shut the office door safely behind him, then I slumped back more safely in my chair.

I had the outlines of the story, as I have told it, from Captain Baker who dropped into our office three mornings running while I was in sole charge, Thursby having been sent off for a week's leave on the advice of the M.O. before his replacement came. He told me the story in a calm, unforced way, bringing out the details naturally in the course of conversation. His tone was at once generous, simple and full of feeling.

These talks with Baker had a curious effect on me; it was as if they slid open some secret panel at the back of my mind and released all at once the emotions that had been imprisoned behind it. How well I remember the last morning after he had left me. I stood up and walked to the window, feeling an inescapable urge to look at the desert outside. What a short time it was since it had seemed to me nothing but the lifeless, fleshless corpse of the countryside of my homeland, which I had learned to love so well! I smiled as the thought of the sergeant peering at land formations crossed my mind. Then thinking of Thursby, Mahomed and all the crowd of ragged, poverty-stricken and diseased fellaheen who had shuffled through our office, I felt a sudden shame at the way in which we make use of the sufferings of others for our own spiritual growth. I stretched out my arm into the sunlight and at once a feeling of peace beyond the mere triumphs and disasters of humanity took hold of me. I felt the desert already beginning to enrich my experience and soak into my consciousness. The very air seemed teeming with interest. The veins from my arm carried back the warmth of the sun to every corner of my body and my blood began once again to flow from very pleasure of existence. I smiled a little sceptically to myself. How long was such exaltation likely to last?

SELECTED NOTICES

Left Hand Right Hand and *The Scarlet Tree* by Sir Osbert Sitwell. Macmillan & Co. Ltd. 15s. each.

IN a parcel of books from England, in the spring of 1945, Sir Osbert Sitwell's *Left Hand Right Hand* arrived at Caserta. One would have welcomed it anywhere; and yet Caserta was obviously exactly the place in which to read of the Sitwell and Londesborough forebears: like a lump of sugar in coffee, it carried a small sentimental flavour to quicken the palate. From our little wooden tents (as we called them) under the dusty ilexes, we could see great buskined statues spotted with shade or lying in full sunlight, lemon-coloured, toppled from their pedestals, at the *carrefours* of the royal park. And in the palace itself, what a tumult of statuary for the officers to hang their caps on as they climbed the double staircase to tea! No doubt these marbles wear much the same blend of myth and habit, ruin and wonder, as crowned the masters of Blankney and Badminton and Renishaw in the eyes of the outer world. And for myself, just as I like to discover a Neptune or a Melpomene on my walks, I enjoyed as much as any that part of the book which moves in the godlike calm of the mid-nineteenth century.

This was not, however, the universal opinion. The large genealogical stream upon which, in the second half of the book, Sir Osbert rides to sea, often embarrassed my friends. It rolls and sparkles like the Tagus instead of hugging a narrow bank, and thus it invited the reaction of the little boys at Sir Osbert's day school who shouted 'Don't think you're everybody just because your father's a bloody baronet'. The reaction was as unprovoked in the one case as the other, but I can see why it arose. In either the critics were acting with a sound defensive instinct.

For nobody enjoys the spectacle of a public figure—and especially an artist—who not only starts with every apparent advantage, but develops his advantages in an unexpected way. It is bad enough to be a baronet; it is worse to be a baronet who cannot easily be pigeon-holed as a rebel or a reactionary. As a writer, as an 'advanced' writer all the more, Sir Osbert ought to be in revolt against that half of him which is baronet. But not at all. He doesn't revolt, he expands. He doesn't even double back, he culminates. An admirable ancestry—various, picturesque, intelligent, gay—has done the right thing by him with a vengeance. It has given him the right kind of country home—incidentally, Mr. John Piper's pictures of it lose much of their point in monochrome—and it has given him an exceptionally satisfying brother and sister. Above all, it has given the gift of gifts, detachment. Such an ancestry deserves a hundred pages; but it is not surprising that the less fortunate try to take Sir Osbert down a peg. Not from jealousy. But from an irrepressible sense of outrage that a dealer should deal so many trumps to one player.

Yet the fascination of *Left Hand Right Hand* lies in Sir Osbert's difficulties as obviously as in his luck. For what are the obstacles to art put up by overcrowding, overwork, hunger, drabness, compared with those offered by 'a good home'? About the same, I should say. Misery and hunger can be overcome; there have been plenty of Lawrences in the world, and they have drawn strength, if

indirectly, from their first environment. But the streptococci of affluence, comfort, servants, large drawing-rooms, lurk in the system for ever; they need only a lowered vitality to take command. Had Sir Osbert's parents offered him the comprehending kindness he had a right to expect he might never, I conceive, have written at all; or written small books of verse like Byron's friend, Lord Leigh, or large ones like Wilfred Blunt, while his sister, in the manner of Lady Waterford, combed through the folk-tunes of Derbyshire in search of another Londonderry Air. The danger is a real one. Streptococci are so nearly invincible; their visible signs—good manners, charm, a sense of tradition, a powerful digestion, distrust of wit, xenophobia, love of cousins—so often accompany a paralysed creative faculty. But Sir Osbert's salvation seems never to have been in doubt. One need only open *Left Hand Right Hand* at the frontispiece. There he stands, at the age of three, in a sailor suit, grasping a stick. He is not a pretty child. Pretty children are children who wallow in the fact of infancy; he is evidently determined to grow up as fast as possible. There is a look of disillusion in his eye. He has his stick in hand and his back is turned on the mournful frozen flowers which the photographer has strewn behind him in an attempt to soften an uncompromising outline. Already the eye is that of the note-taker, the mouth as firm as a prophet's.

Sir Osbert's first success, then, is to place himself within the plethoric expanse of confidence which covered all Europe when he was small. We read *Left Hand Right Hand* slowly at Caserta in order to prolong that sense of confidence, but in Sir Osbert's second volume, *The Scarlet Tree*, it has been given a fresh and more hopeful meaning. It is now not only the false confidence in Edwardian peace—though of that too there is a conclusive picture in the pages describing the life which circled round Lord Londesborough at Blankney and elsewhere—but the genuine confidence which is aroused by the spectacle of a talent unfolding in harsh, yes harsh, circumstances. Sir Osbert has shown the strength of his family gift as a victory over a background. It cannot have been easy. There must have been so much to divert a growing faculty for wonder into shallow passages, to censor observation and to redirect intelligence. Even the oddness of parents must have been a hindrance, for unconventional parents usually act as a lightning conductor to their children; they assume the whole impact of family deviation. Sir Osbert, however, seems to have been saved by a kind of quietism, and then carried forward by a triple alliance with brother and sister. It is that quietism which lights up a series of ravishing meditations built round the gardens, the nurseries, the London streets, the country houses in which the Sitwells lived: meditations which give the two volumes their symmetry. One can watch a particular gift inform these landscapes, or microcosms, with a liveliness as mysterious as yeast, until the ordinary colours assume that glow which is Sir Osbert's contribution to English prose. This warms the reader's confidence at once. The order which, with time, Sir Osbert imposed on the prismatic variations of childhood, the sureness with which he has avoided what was expected of him, are an encouragement to us all, for it is comforting to be reminded that hard obstacles can be less inhibiting to writers than soft ones. Glimpses of how the triple alliance worked within the Sitwell family are all the more exhilarating as conviction grows that the Enemy hidden in the life around them was more subtle, and therefore more dangerous, than any with

which succeeding literary generations have had to contend. It is not for nothing that 1914 still represents 'the beginning of the War'; those of us who were children then, or not yet born, have been spared the sense of eclipse which overwhelmed every artist who was at that time in his twenties, an eclipse the darkness of which must be measured against the deceitful promise of the century, fed by the jeremiads and exultations of the Victorians. To be part of a world which puts continuity among the virtues, to be an important part of it, carrying obligations which not only take no account of the arts but traditionally oppose them, to achieve a first synthesis between private and public life, and then to have your world knocked to bits in a European war: how much more embittering than to have grown up from birth into a society in which the artist knows, like the saint, that he can only survive by a Nietzschean effort of will, under no illusions of grace and with few facilities of circumstance.

Here I must pay tribute to the concreteness of Sir Osbert's memory. Or rather, to his power of making it serve him. He uses the just perspective of a conscious artist; what he remembers is true in colour and taste and significance, not bound by the strict sequential truth of a photographic record. When he writes about an Eton adventure, for instance, there is a sense in which it is not true. This is what he says:

'Suddenly, during *Absence* on a Saturday afternoon, when a good many ox-eyed parents were listlessly wandering about outside the railings, there was a vast explosion from the cannon, accompanied by a long, spluttering, popping fizz, an apocalyptic rushing of flame, wind and soot, and a discharge of such miscellaneous objects as unwanted buttons of all sorts, and old boots and toothbrushes. Stars and whorls of fire seared the air: hats were blown from heads in every direction, and even the mortar-board of the officiating master . . . was lifted from his head and dashed to the ground. And for some minutes the air remained dark, as after a volcanic eruption, with falling lumps of hard, apparently cindery matter and pieces of charred paper. Through the railings, the blackened, hatless faces of parents gazed in wondering dismay.'

Not the plain and simple truth, perhaps; but certainly truth—thrown out of proportion, as it should be, by the even, ruminative processes of learning and ennui which extended round that particular Saturday afternoon at school. In other words, there is nothing passive in Sir Osbert's experience of life; and the skill with which he shapes that experience is reflected in a manner of writing which insists on being positive too. 'Manner', though, is too prim a word for what is really a skilful use of syntax—that neglected vehicle of expression. The minute control of speed in relation to context is the supreme test of an autobiographer: on his success his power of conveying the reality of the past depends. Perhaps, to an austere taste, Sir Osbert sometimes overweights his paragraphs—that is an aspect of the virtuoso to be found in all the arts: one has only to think of Liszt or Cellini. But generally the inner rhythm of his prose carefully reinforces what is being said, and hurries or dawdles with the exactest precision. Two examples will show this, neither of which has anything of the set-piece about it:

'Even in the shelter of the darkness of the North Bow Room—as the night-nursery was called—you would have known that you were near the roof of a high old house standing upon a lofty hill. Here, unlike Gosden, every window

has a wooden shutter, and so the darkness reigns for long absolute, and is at most a faintly streaked and never a glowing darkness. Yet, in spite of all this extra muffling and fastening, the feel of the air is very different. If there is a wind, though it is full-blown summer, the blinds and their wooden ends will bluster and flap against the shutters of the open windows, making the noise that a gale makes in the sails and rigging of a ship: if it is calm, the light, when at last it penetrates the cracks of one of the shutters, will be much whiter, because, as always on fine early mornings, a cocoon of white mist envelops the house and trees, hiding everything in a kind of gleaming, white negation. The light also comes down the chimney, tracing the outline of a woman's head upon the floor. And, though I know this outline is really but an accidental likeness, lacks substance and reality, does not move or breathe, I am frightened, for here the darkness—and even an August dawn—is frightening. It is so dark that I cannot see my brother at all, though a rapier of light points at a mirror, so I turn over on my other side. . . .

And:

'He was short and broad in build—if such a term may be used of it, and his eyes of a disproportionate blue glared uneasily, though with a disconcerting sweetness, from a pale face to which a heavy, creeping moustache conspired to give a semblance of heartiness: notwithstanding, the whole effect indubitably recalled that of one of those nameless things that haunt dimly the dark upper air of mediocre English parish churches, or of a countenance hastily improvised out of cheese-cloth at a seance.'

Nobody, I think, who notices the subtleties of good prose would underrate the sombre rhythm of the nursery scene from which I have taken a few sentences, the appropriate slowing-down and the moment of acceleration which comes, like the twitch of a nerve under the skin, at the close; or, in the second example, the little canter of malice in their last dozen words. It is their malleable syntax, far more than an evocative use of words, which brings these books alive. The 'Watteau-like mists of osier', the 'lagoons which flower every day anew in shallow, startling fields of blue and green' are part of a family jewel-box; the flash of it is sometimes dazzling, sometimes odd; but Sir Osbert's delicate syntax is his own, and perfectly adapted to the memorial process, in itself a syntactical one, of unfolding the past.

The people and places written of in these two volumes are sufficiently varied to have brought on Sir Osbert's head a very general rain of the epithets 'baroque' and 'Gothick'. Nevertheless, the double portrait of Sir George Sitwell and his valet, Henry Moat, cannot be passed over in silence. Those letters! . . . 'Poor Sir George, he really is a hero for his bed. I have known him often being *tired* of lying in bed, get up to have a rest, and after he had rested get back again into bed like a martyr. . . .' The tight-rope exercise of writing about parents has, in fact, been carried off with perfect dexterity. The portrait is only begun; but it is already wonderfully funny, endearing at a safe distance, and at no expense of affection or dignity. It is enough in itself to justify the claim that these books—and especially I think, *The Scarlet Tree*—are, in their kind, of the first order.

ALAN PRYCE-JONES

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